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THE SEPOY MUTINY
AND
THE REVOLT OF 1857

BY
R. C. MAJUMDAR, M.A., Ph.D.
Vice-President, International Commission for a History of the Scientific and Cultural Development of Mankind (UNESCO); Honorary Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland; Honorary Fellow of the Asiatic Society, Bombay; Fellow of the Asiatic Society of Calcutta;
Formerly
Vice-Chancellor of the University of Dacca; Principal, College of Indology, Hindu University, Varanasi; Director, Board of Editors for the Freedom Movement in India; Principal, College of Indology, Nagpur University; Visiting Professor of the Universities of Chicago and Pennsylvania (U.S.A.).



FIRMA K. L. MUKHOPADHYAY
6/1A, BANCHHARAM AKRUR LANE,
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TO

MY WIFE

PRIYABALĀ

WHOSE UNFAILING CARE FOR MY HEALTH

AND

UNGRUDGING TOIL FOR MY COMFORT

HAVE GIVEN ME THE LEISURE AND OPPORTUNITY

FOR

WHOLE-HEARTED DEVOTION TO HISTORICAL STUDIES

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The first edition of this book, published shortly before the Centenary of the great outbreak of 1857, was sold out in less than six months' time. A second edition has long been overdue, but I did not take up this task so long for two reasons. In the first place I was engaged in writing the history of the Freedom Movement in India of which the revolt of 1857 is an important episode. As a study of the first is a necessary background for a proper understanding of the second I naturally gave priority to its publication. In the second place, since the publication of the first edition of this book, new books on the subject began to appear one by one and I thought it would be politic to wait for some time so that I might carefully consider the different views expressed by new scholars, particularly about the real nature of the great upheaval of 1857. This topic formed the central theme of my book and I came in for a good deal of criticism for having tried to demolish the view, then almost unanimously held, that the outbreak of 1857 was the first national war of independence. I naturally was eager to consult the new publications in order to reconsider my views on the subject in the light of new facts and arguments which they might have contained. Although most of the recent publications on the subject are merely sentimental effusions, there are a few honourable exceptions. The authors of two of these, Haraprasad Chattopadhyaya and S. B. Chaudhuri, have given more or less detailed analysis of the part actually played by the people which forms the only proper basis for forming a valid opinion on the nature of the outbreak. Unfortunately they hold almost diametrically opposite views about it. Chattopadhyaya holds the same views as I expressed, namely that neither the sepoys nor the civil population took up arms against the Government with

the political motive of liberating India from the British yoke, but their motives were of selfish nature (p. 199). As his book was published in November, 1957, only seven months after the publication of mine, it is very likely that he arrived independently at these conclusions.

S. B. Chaudhuri, on the other hand, does not take into account the ignoble aspect of the 'popular upsurge'—a term frequently used by him to denote the civil rebellion—and the motive which really inspired it; he emphasizes only the spirit of opposition to British rule and practically ignores the internecine fight between vested interests and among different classes of people in 1857. He holds that though fighting for their lands and rights the local landed chiefs still could function on a national plane. He looks upon the revolt of 1857 as "the first combined attempt of many classes of people to challenge a foreign power" and concludes that "this is a real, if remote, approach to the freedom movement of India of a later age" (p. 297). In view of Chaudhuri's thinly veiled attempt to uphold the current view, I have discussed his views at great length in this revised text, in order to enable the readers to form their own conclusions.

Another notable work on the subject is that by the late lamented scholar Dr. S. N. Sen. He was commissioned by the Government of India to write the book which was published on the occasion of the official celebration of the centenary of the outbreak of 1857. Dr. Sen has not given any detailed account of the local risings of the civil population and has dealt very briefly with the all-important topic of the nature of the outbreak. He invests the Mutiny of 1857 with the dignity of a national war of independence only in respect of Avadh (Oudh) and Sahabad, and not the area outside these two regions (p. 411). But even this restricted acceptance of the popular view is further qualified by the statement that the term 'national' "must be used in a limited sense, for the conception of Indian nationality was yet in

embryo". I have weighed very carefully the facts cited by him and his arguments, but have found no reason to alter my views. It is, however, a matter of gratification to me that as a challenge to the current theory, his view makes a very near approach to mine, though they were independently conceived by us. I have discussed in detail (pp. 420 ff) why I am unable to accept his views about Avadh and Sahabad.

In this revised edition I have added a detailed account of the local risings in order to enable the readers to form a proper estimate of the real nature of the outbreak of 1857. I believe that anyone who goes through these accounts in an unbiassed mind and without any preconceived views, would lose his traditional faith in the first national war of independence fought in 1857, or at least entertain grave doubts about it. There is no gainsaying the fact that such a faith has been considerably shaken during the last five years and I may humbly claim for my book some share in effecting this great change in the opinion of the educated public.

The general view I expressed in the first edition remains unchanged in this revised text. To regard the outbreak of 1857 simply as a mutiny of sepoys is probably as great an error as to look upon it as a national war of independence. What began as a mutiny ended in certain areas in an outbreak of civil population which was sometimes organized by local leaders to serve their own interests, and sometimes transformed itself merely into an outburst of mob violence such as happens very naturally, and almost inevitably, whenever an administrative machinery completely breaks down and there is nothing to take its place. But neither the numerous local Chiefs and leaders nor the people who followed them were inspired by the national ideal or the patriotic motive to liberate their motherland; indeed such notions were as yet hardly known in this country. Their activities, of necessity,

made the British their hated enemies, for it was merely by preventing the reassertion of the British authority over their area that they could hope to retain their ill-gotten gains. Hence the war-cry 'drive away the English'—a slogan dictated by pure self-interest and not a desire to get rid of an alien rule and recover the freedom of the country. There might have been honourable exceptions, here and there, who entertained such a noble desire, but their number must have been very insignificant, and in any case they did not leave any impress on the movement. This is, in short, the view which I sought to establish in the first edition of this book and further study and thought that I have been able to devote to the subject have served only to deepen my conviction. Popular errors, backed by sentiments, die hard, but signs are not wanting that even popular notions are undergoing great change in this respect.

Probably far greater change has been effected in the public opinion in respect of the so-called heroes of 1857, specially Bahadur Shah, Nana Sahib, the Rani of Jhansi and Kunwar Singh. It has been my painful duty, for the sake of historical truth, to debunk these heroes whose memory has been enshrined in the hearts of the Indians for more than half a century, and who have been the object of genuine reverence as fighters for the freedom of India from the foreign yoke. The view that none of them has any legitimate claim to such a position was propounded for the first time in the first edition of this book, but the evidence cited there seems to have been so foolproof that already the cult of worshipping these heroes is steadily vanishing into the limbo of oblivion. As a practical demonstration of it I may mention a circumstance which rests on the authority of a high official, though I cannot vouch for its truth. I was told by this official, some time after the centenary celebrations of the 'First War of Indian Independence' by the Government of India, that the one particular item of the ceremony, namely showing distinctive honours to

the heroes mentioned above, was dropped mainly on account of the publication of my book which depicted Bahadur Shah as a traitor and Nana Sahib as a vainglorious nonentity. In particular the idea of issuing special postal stamps in their honour was abandoned, even though arrangements were already in progress. I was further told that an exception or some allowance was made in favour of Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi, for even according to my book she deserved the highest praise for her courage, bravery and military skill.

In writing this book and bringing out a new edition I have been solely inspired by the idea of discovering and preaching truth undeterred by any emotional fervour or pseudo-patriotic sentiments. Free India has chosen as its national motto the great saying of the old Indian sages—"Truth Shall Prevail." I have felt it to be my duty to honour it by removing the cobwebs of falsehood and half-truths which surround the current views of Indian history. A historical error once established has more than the proverbial nine lives of a cat. But I have faith in our national motto and firmly believe that the truth shall certainly prevail in the long run. Perhaps the day is not distant when the truth about the outbreak of 1857 shall triumph over sentimental effusions which still hold sway over a section of the educated public. Reference may be made to two new features introduced in this edition. The first is a map to illustrate the outbreak of 1857. I express my thanks to the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, for having given permission to reproduce it from Vol. IX of the *History and Culture of the Indian People.* The second is the addition of a select bibliography which will be useful to those who desire to make a further study on the subject. I take this opportunity to offer my hearty thanks to the reviewers of the first edition of this book both for their appreciation and criticism which have been of great value to me. I must also thank the large number of readers who have overwhelmed me with their eulogies and even congratulations for 'pricking the

bubble' or 'exploding the myth' as they have termed it. My thanks are also due to my daughter Srimati Sumitra Chaudhuri B. A. for preparing the Index, and to the Calcutta Oriental Press for the expeditious and careful printing of the book.

R. C. Majumdar

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

In may appear somewhat strange that having devoted myself so long to the study of ancient Indian history I shall undertake, at the fag-end of my life, to write the history of the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. It is, therefore, necessary to say a few words about the genesis of this book, or, rather, the History of the Freedom Movement in India, of which it forms the first part. Ever since the achievement of independence I made various efforts to induce the Government of Bengal and the Government of India to take up this project. The Honourable Minister of Education in the Government of West Bengal, to whom I submitted, in December 1948, a modest scheme of writing the history of the freedom movement in Bengal, at a cost of ten to fifteen thousand Rupees only, did not even acknowledge receipt of my letter. The Government of India, Ministry of Education, turned down the proposal of writing a History of the Freedom Movement in India which was moved by me and unanimously passed by the Indian Historical Records Commission. A copy of an article of mine, published early in 1948, in which I explained the reasons for taking up this work without any delay, and elaborated a plan for the same, was forwarded to the Prime Minister. I was advised by the Prime Minister's secretariat to contact the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Accordingly I wrote a letter to this Ministry on June 15, 1948, but received no reply. Then I wrote a personal letter to Dr. Rajendra Prasad who heartily took up the idea and wrote a very encouraging letter to me. What steps he took about it I do not know, but shortly afterwards, in 1949, the Ministry of Education appointed a Committee to consider the proposal. This Committee made several recommendations, but they were not accepted. Then other steps were taken, departmentally, by the Ministry of Education to the same end, but

nothing came out of all these. Finally, in December 1952, the Ministry of Education appointed a Board of Editors "in connection with the compilation of the History of Freedom Movement in India". It consisted of eight or ten (or more) members at different times, about one half of whom were historians, and the other half, politicians of the Congress school, with two staunch Congressmen as its Chairman and Secretary. I was a member of the Board, but was requested, after a few months, to accept the post of the whole-time Director of its office. The choice fell upon me presumably because I initiated the movement and was intimately associated with all the previous attempts to achieve the object for which the Board was appointed. Having taken an active part for more than five years for carrying through this project, I could not very well decline this offer, and accepted it in May, 1953. As the Director, I had to prepare a draft of the proposed history for the consideration of the Board.

It is hardly necessary for me to add that I could not conscientiously have undertaken to write this great historical work, or have persevered in its preparations, except in the exercise of an unfettered judgment. But as soon as I was engaged in preparing the draft, I realised the difficulty of writing history on a co-operative basis in non-academic environment, and on a theme round which strong emotions have gathered for years, and which involves, directly or indirectly, a judgment on the views and actions of persons who occupy, for the time being, high places either in actual life or in the estimation of an influential section of the people. Although this seems to me to be the main reason why the draft prepared by me was not destined to see the light of the day, I would rather draw a veil over the manifold ways in which the difficulties presented themselves in various aspects of the problem, and refer, by way of illustration, only to the Mutiny of 1857 which forms the subject-matter of the present work.

It did not take me long to find out that the Secretary held very definite views about the outbreak of 1857, and was determined to get them incorporated in the proposed history. He held that "in 1857 an organised attempt was made by the natural leaders of India to combine themselves into a single command with the sole object of driving out the British power from India in order that a single, unified politically free and sovereign state may be established. That attempt was conscious and deliberate". We had frequent discussions on the subject, and though I could not induce him to keep an open mind on the subject, I did not mind very much so long as it was confined to a mere opinion. But then I found that he proposed to collect only those materials which support his point of view, as otherwise it would, to use his own words again, "thoroughly upset our purpose". I could not accept this view and issued instructions to the effect that search for materials should not be guided by any definite object in view, and an endeavour should be made to collect all records which are likely to throw any light on the nature of the movement of 1857. Later, without my knowledge, the Secretary appointed a scholar for the specific task of writing the chapter—almost an entire section—on the outbreak of 1857. This scholar worked for about two years at the National Archives of India and wrote the chapter. On going through it I found that while it faithfully echoed the sentiments of the Secretary, it was hopelessly at variance with what I conceive to be the true principles of historical writing. It also appeared to me that the writer failed to take into consideration many essential records. I, therefore, submitted my draft of the First Volume of the History to the Board, with a note that as this particular chapter was quite unsatisfactory, I have omitted it. After a prolonged study of the subject, extending over several months, I found it necessary to write the whole chapter afresh. I did so, and submitted it to the Secretary for making typed copies and circulating them to the members of the Board. I do not

know whether it was done, for shortly after this I had to cut off my connection with the Board under very unpleasant circumstances, to which I do not wish to refer in detail. I need only mention that the Secretary did not send me either the original or the final typed copy of the chapter in spite of my repeated requests. I gathered that the Secretary made a confidential report on this matter to the Honourable Minister of Education, but I cannot vouch for the truth of this.

Not long after this the Board of Editors was dissolved by the Government on December 31, 1955. I am told that the materials collected by the Board, as well as the two volumes of draft, extending over more than 800 pages (approximately), prepared by me, have been placed by the Government in the custody of the Director of the National Archives, New Delhi, but I have no definite information on this subject. Though more than a year has passed since then, it is not known whether the Government propose to publish the History of the Freedom Movement in India. In any case, I have now little hope that the draft prepared by me will be officially published, at least in near future. So the only alternative left to me is to publish the result of my study, involving hard labour for a period of nearly three years, as an independent work in my own name. As it is very difficult and expensive to publish the voluminous history as a private enterprise, I have decided to bring it out in a number of self-contained parts, the present book being the first of the series.

As my views on the great outbreak of 1857 and its main actors differ radically from those now generally held on the subject in this country, and particularly by the political party which presides over its destiny, I thought it desirable to bring them to the notice of the public in order that a discussion of the different points of view might help everybody to ascertain the truth. There were, besides, two other considerations which urged me to bring out this book without any delay. In the first place, the Centenary of 1857 will be performed

with due solemnity within a few months. Secondly, the Government of India will shortly publish an officially sponsored history of the Mutiny. For all these reasons I thought it necessary that my book on the outbreak of 1857 should be published as early as possible. It is hardly necessary to add that the now defunct Board of Editors, mentioned above, has absolutely no connection with this publication, which is different in many respects from the original draft which I prepared for them. I have not incorporated herein anything which is not my own contribution on the subject, save a few minor points for which I have duly acknowledged my obligations in proper places, and I have utilised only those records which were independently studied by me. I may add that the scholar specially appointed by the Board for writing the chapter on the Mutiny had no knowledge of many valuable records which have been discussed in details in this work. Among these may be mentioned the large number of contemporary records regarding the Rani of Jhansi (pp. 147-53), the long statement of Sitaram Bawa (pp. 184 ff), Nanakchand's Diary (pp. 189ff.), and the correspondence of Bahadur Shah and his family with the British (pp. 122-4).

A word of explanation is necessary in regard to materials collected by the Board, but ignored by me. The Secretary, like a true politician, always took good care to regale the public from time to time with announcements in newspapers of discoveries of highly important historical records about the Mutiny. My repeated requests to him not to make such announcements without a preliminary scrutiny of their genuineness by me bore no fruit. His stunts about Azimulla's Diary and a letter written by the Rani of Jhansi to a Panda of the Temple of Jagannath at Puri created a great sensation at the time. Both of these have been declared to be forgeries by competent authorities. The Rani's letter bears the English date 3. 4. 56 and refers to the use of cartridge

mixed with cow's blood. I discussed the matter in a session of the Indian History Congress, and a number of scholars who had special knowledge of the records of Jhansi, including G. C. Tambe, a relation of the Rani, unanimously declared, without the least hesitation, that the letter was a forgery. The Urdu language of the Diary of Azimulla has also been declared to be very different from that in use in 1857. Evidence was also collected by the Secretary about the death of Nana's wife, in the twenties of this century (or thereabout), and the presence of Nana himself in her Sradh ceremony. Nana's son (?), who furnished this information to the Secretary, was asked, at my instance, to supply names of the priests and some persons who attended the Sradh ceremony, together with their addresses. When these were obtained, inquiry was made of them through the District Magistrates, and the whole thing proved to be a huge fraud. The Secretary also collected sworn evidence from local persons about the death of Nana in a locality (whose name I forget) in Kathiawar Peninsula. A member of the Board, with a knowledge of the local language, was deputed to make an inquiry on the spot, and his report proved the whole thing to be a got-up affair. The Secretary next shifted the scene of Nana's death, on very reliable (?) evidence, to some place in U. P. (near the old Naimisha forest, if I remember aright), but this, again, proved equally illusory. A copy (or original) of the last Will and Testament of Tantia Topi was also secured by the Secretary which showed that the real Tantia Topi was not hanged by the British ! As I have now no access to the papers of the Board's office, I refer to these from memory and cannot supply accurate details. I have, therefore, excluded from my purview these and other materials of this nature, which the Secretary took great pains to collect. But I do not regret this as these materials are of no value for the purpose of sober history.

Whatever might have been the attitude of the Secretary, I shall be failing in my duty if I do not mention my deep debt

of gratitude to the Board for having given me an excellent opportunity for studying the history of the Freedom Movement in India. I am also thankful to my old pupil Dr. S. B. Chaudhuri, Professor, Presidency College, Calcutta, for helping me in various ways. I must express my deep obligations to Dr. E. G. Tambe of Nagpur for having placed at my disposal all the valuable records about the Rani of Jhansi collected by his father, late G. C. Tambe. I also take this opportunity to offer my heart-felt thanks to the Librarian, National Library, Calcutta, and the members of his staff for the ungrudging help I received from them in preparing the History of the Freedom Movement, of which this is the first part. I wish I could say the same thing of the National Archives of India, Delhi, a rich treasure-house of very valuable records. Unfortunately, the rules and regulations of that institution, and a lack of personal sympathy and a spirit of co-operation—not to put it more bluntly—on the part of its Director, rendered it well-nigh impossible to get any useful material out of the Archives without such delay and vexatious procedure as sometimes rendered it nugatory for all practical purposes. I write this more in sorrow than in anger, and can only hope that this great national institution might be more useful to students of history than it actually is at the present moment. Repeated efforts to draw the attention of the authorities to this lamentable state of things having failed in their object, I am forced to say all this, not in a spirit of fault-finding, but in the hope that it might lead to a strong public agitation which alone can possibly effect any real improvement.

I offer my apology for this somewhat long and unusual Preface. When I suddenly left the office of the Board, and it was shortly after dissolved without completing the History of Freedom Movement, I received requests from various quarters to throw some light on this mysterious episode. I did not choose to give any personal explanation at the time,

lest it might affect the publication of the History. But now that the Government have practically shelved the whole thing, I feel it to be my duty to give the public some inkling of the inner affair, so that there may be a genuine understanding of the situation and a renewed effort to start an organisation *on right lines* for completing the task that was begun by the Board.

In conclusion I must thank the authorities of the Calcutta Oriental Press for having printed this work in a remarkably short time, even though the proofs had to be sent to the author living seven hundred miles away. Thanks are also due to my daughter Srimati Sumitra Chaudhuri for having prepared the Index.

Nagpur
February, 1957.

R. C. Majumdar

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST EDITION

The great outbreak of 1857 is a memorable episode in Indian history which no educated Indian or Englishman has ever regarded without interest, and few without prejudice. There is no other event in the history of India of which we possess so many contemporary or nearly contemporary records and accounts, and memoirs, reviews, reminiscences, and historical studies, culminating in six big volumes of official history, written during the next fifty years. Yet there is no end of controversy, even now, not only as regards the cause of the movement, but also about its precise character. It is primarily this aspect of the question which forms the subject-matter of this book. As I do not propose to write a comprehensive history of the great outbreak, a task which has been entrusted by the Government of India to abler hands, I have not thought it necessary to go into the details of the various insurrections and military campaigns, and have given merely a general outline of the major movements and principal events which would enable one to understand the nature of the movement and the character of its leading personalities. After thus describing the main incidents I have given, on the basis of reliable data, consisting mainly of contemporary records, a brief sketch of the leading personalities and the sepoys, as a class, that played the prominent role in the great movement. Thus, even at the risk of repetition I have tried to draw a faithful and realistic portrait of Bahadur Shah, Nana Sahib, Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi, Kunwar Singh and the sepoys, among others, whose images in popular minds are the products of romantic and patriotic sentiments rather than of an objective study of historical facts. I have next discussed, in the light of the data thus collected, the causes that led to the great outbreak and also its character. As regards the first, it is necessary to take into consideration, not

only the immediate and direct, but also the remote and indirect causes. For this purpose I have discussed in Book I the various aspects of British rule in India from 1757 to 1857, and the grievances and discontents generated by them. This has been treated at some length as I believe that what happened in 1857 cannot be regarded as a sudden happening or an isolated movement, but its roots lie deep in the past. Book I, therefore, although dealing with past history, forms, really speaking, the true background of the outbreak of 1857.

As regards the nature of the movement I have discussed whether it was merely a mutiny of soldiers or an organised general revolt of the people, and also, whether there is any reasonable ground for regarding it as a national war of independence, whose centenary is going to be celebrated in course of the next few months. In order to form a correct judgment on this question I have made an attempt to find out, first of all, whether there was a definite plan and organisation behind the movement, and if so, its nature and object. In the second place, I have tried to trace, as far as possible, the motives which inspired the different elements that joined in the struggle.

In order to complete the general review of the great revolt I have briefly discussed the causes of its failure. I have also added an account of the atrocities perpetrated on both sides during the outbreak. For while the massacre, at Kanpur, of the European men, women, and children by the Indian sepoys is a matter of common knowledge, the public is generally ignorant of the still more horrible cruelties perpetrated by the British. In drawing this lurid picture I have relied almost exclusively on the British official records and the statements made by the English writers, as these are not likely to exaggerate their own misdeeds and extenuate those of the Indians.

In conclusion, I may add that I found no little difficulty in choosing a suitable title for the book. 'Sepoy Mutiny' or 'War of Independence' would be equally inappropriate, as it

begs the very question which it is the main object of this book to discuss. I have selected the title 'the Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857', as in my opinion it correctly describes the essential nature of the movement, whatever view we might take of it. The word 'revolt' is used in its normal sense of casting off allegiance to the rulers, and does not convey any moral judgment such as disapproval or odium. In the absence of any better word, I have also used the word 'rebel' in this purely etymological sense, to denote the Indians who took up arms against the British Government. No stigma is attached to this word. Every war of independence is bound to be a rebellion in this sense, and the rebels, or those who fight against the Government, are not necessarily a bad set, and may be the noblest persons or the greatest patriots for all we know. So I would request my readers to take the words 'revolt' and 'rebel' in a colourless sense, and not to read in them more than is intended.

ABBREVIATIONS

As a general rule books are referred to by the surname of the author whose full name and the title of the book will be found in the Bibliography. Two or more books by the same author are distinguished by Arabic numerals added after the surname. Thus 'Holmes' means the only book by T. R. Holmes, while Forrest—I and Forrest—II refer, respectively, to the first and the second book by G. W. Forrest, mentioned in the Bibliography. The following further abbreviations have been used in the footnotes.

Advanced Hist.	Advanced History of India by R. C. Majumdar and others.
AS	Anderson and Subedar
BPP	*The Bengal Past and Present*
BD	Bandyopadhyaya, Durgadas
CTM	Metcalfe, C. T.
FM	Forrest—I
FS	Forrest—II.
Freedom-Bihar	Datta, K. K.—II
Freedom-Bombay	Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement in India collected from Bombay Government Records.
HCIP	*The History and Culture of the Indian People*, edited by R. C. Majumdar and published by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay.
K	Kaye, Sir John William.
M	Malleson, G. B.—I.
Mal	Malleson, G. B.—II.

MS. D.	Manuscript Records in the National Archives of India.
MS. L.	Kaye's Mutiny Papers preserved in the India Office (now called Commonwealth Relations) Library, London.
Narrative	*Narrative of Events Attending the Outbreak of Disturbances.* Published by the Government of India (see p. 114).
NF	Mukhopadhyaya, Sambhuchandra.
PIHRC	*Proceedings of the Indian Historical Records Commission.*
RP	*The Mutiny of the Bengal Army* (known as *Red Pamphlet*). London, 1857.
SAK.	Syed Ahmad Khan, *An Essay on the Causes of the Indian Revolt.* Translated by W. N. Lees. Calcutta, 1860,
SB	Chaudhuri, S. B.
SHI	*Des Sentiments de justice et d'Humanite de l'Angleterre dans la Question Indienne.* Paris, 1857.
Siege	*History of the Siege of Delhi* by an officer who served there. Edinburgh, 1861.
Sketches	G. D. Oswell, *Sketches of Rulers of India.*
TB	*Trial of Muhammad Bahadur Shah* (Selections from the Records of the Government of the Punjab) 1870.
TH	Thompson, E.
THG	Edward Thompson and G. T. Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India.* Allahabad, 1958.

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CHAPTER I

EXPANSION OF BRITISH DOMINIONS

In order to view the outbreak of 1857 in its true perspective, it is necessary to make a rapid survey of the first century of British rule in India, laying emphasis upon certain aspects which have a special bearing upon that movement.

The death of Aurangzeb marks a turning-point in the history of India. In less than a quarter of a century the Mughal Empire showed visible signs of decline, and the Marathas established their supremacy, not only over the whole of Maharashtra proper, but also over some territories in South India and a considerable part of Northern India. The further break-down of the Mughal Empire set in with the assumption of virtual independence by the Governors of Provinces like the Deccan, Avadh and Bengal, and the disintegration was completed by the invasion of Nadir Shah in A. D. 1739. The Marathas seemed at one time to be the most likely successor of the Mughals, but though they wielded political authority over a large area, they failed to establish a stable and organised empire and wasted their energy and strength in plundering raids over neighbouring provinces. The political condition of India after the fall of the Mughal Empire may be most aptly described by the technical political word in Sanskrit, *Matsya-nyaya* (like fish in water), where might was right and the stronger devoured the weaker ones. To use a well known phraseology in English, India was under 'Free Lance.'

Of the European trading Companies established in India since the sixteenth century A. D., only the French and English East India Companies were sufficiently powerful to defend their own interests by their own efforts in the absence of any

legitimate Government to protect them. But in doing so, they were gradually led to take an active part in the confused politics of the day in the hope of gaining advantages for themselves. This ambitious but risky plan of fishing in troubled waters was suggested by three important discoveries which they made in the forties of eighteenth century A. D. The first was the hopeless incompetence of massive Indian army when pitted against European skill and discipline. The second was the ease with which the European trading Companies could not only recruit Indian soldiers, ready to fight against their own countrymen, but also impart to them skill, discipline, and efficiency of European troops. The third was the possibility of deriving important political and commercial privileges by taking sides in the ever-recurring struggles for succession to the thrones of native States between two or more rival claimants.

The credit for all these discoveries is usually given to Dupleix, the French Governor, who derived immense advantages by putting them into practice in the Carnatic in South India. The English East India Company followed his example in the more fertile soil of Bengal.

After the death of Murshid Quli Khan, the last Viceroy of Bengal under Aurangzeb, in A.D. 1727, his successors, Shujauddin and Sarfaraz Khan, virtually ruled as independent kings over the united Provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. But in A.D. 1740 Alivardi Khan, the Governor of Bihar, organised a conspiracy with important persons at the court of Murshidabad, the capital city of Bengal. He advanced with an army from Bihar, defeated and killed his master Sarfaraz Khan and usurped the kingdom. He could hardly enjoy his ill-gotten gain, as his kingdom was constantly harassed by the Maratha troops of the Bhonsle of Nagpur. At last Alivardi concluded a peace with him by ceding Orissa and promising to pay twelve lakhs of rupees as *Chauth* per annum. The resources of Bengal were, however, taxed to the utmost by these raids when Alivardi died in A.D. 1756.

leaving the throne to his grandson (daughter's son) Siraj-uddaulla. The youth and inexperience of this new king, and his haughty and insolent conduct to some of the leading men of the capital, once more led to a conspiracy in the court, very much similar to that by which his predecessor had usurped the throne of Bengal seventeen years before. But there was a novel feature in this conspiracy which was destined to influence profoundly the whole course of Indian history. In order to ensure success, the conspirators sought the help of the British trading Company at Calcutta, never dreaming of the fatal consequences that would follow from this step.

The English traders eagerly seized the opportunity and entered into a secret treaty with Mir Jafar, the general of Nawab's forces. In the Battle of Palasi (Plassy) that followed, Mir Jafar not only held aloof with his army, but also induced the Nawab to recall the small band of his faithful soldiers who had been pushing back the forces of the English. As soon as they turned back, the British charged and routed the Nawab's forces. Sirajuddaulla fled, but was captured and beheaded. Mir Jafar was proclaimed Nawab, but he was merely a tool in the hands of the English who virtually became the rulers of Bengal.

There was no opposition on the part of the people of Bengal to these foreign rulers, partly because the real nature of British control and its consequences were not fully realised at the beginning, and partly because they were accustomed to such change of rulers and were indifferent to it. Besides, to the majority of the people, it was merely a change from one foreign rule to the other. Ere long the new rulers were hailed by certain sections of people for delivering them from the existing regime of misrule and oppression.

But the English usurpation did not go unchallenged. Shah Alam, both as the crown-prince and Emperor of Delhi, made three expeditions into Bengal, between March 1759 and January 1761, but was miserably defeated each time by the English.

Even the first two Nawabs of Bengal, Mir Jafar and Mir Kasim, whom the British themselves had set up as rulers, chafed at the yoke of the British. The former made secret intrigues with the Dutch which came to nothing, while the latter declared open war. But though he had his army trained in European method, it was successively defeated in three battles. Mir Kasim then formed a confederacy with Shah Alam and Shujauddaulla, ruler of Avadh, but the combined army was defeated by the British at Buxar in A.D. 1764. Mir Kasim fled, but Shah Alam and Shujauddaulla concluded peace with the English, and the former granted them the Diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa (1765).

The British had obtained their first footing in Bengal more by political intrigue and treachery of the Nawab's officials than by military success. But the successive engagements that followed vindicated their claim to the military conquest of Bengal, and the three discoveries, mentioned above, proved to be successful theories in a crucial test. They gradually established their political authority firmly in Bengal, and its resources enabled them to increase their army and make a bold bid for the empire of India.

But the Indian powers were not insensible of the grave situation created by the political supremacy of the British in Bengal. In particular, Hyder Ali, who had established a powerful kingdom in Mysore, was fully conscious of the danger. A grand confederacy of Mysore, Hyderabad and the Maratha powers was organised against the British. But thanks to the diplomacy of Warren Hastings, the British Governor-General, it ultimately came to nothing. Towards the close of the eighteenth century there was probably another attempt to organise a confederacy to drive out the English from India. There seems to have been an understanding between Zaman Shah of Kabul, Tipu Sultan, Sindhia, the Nawab of Avadh, and a few others for this purpose[1]. The details of this confederacy are not known, and though it did not mature, and failed in its chief object,

it had its repercussions on Indian politics, as will be described later.

Although attempts to organise a combined opposition against the British ended in fiasco, they were hard put to it to defend themselves against the onslaughts of Mysore and the Marathas. But ultimately they triumphed over both. The first two Mysore wars went definitely against them, but the last two finally liquidated the kingdom of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan. Two strenuous wars, including several campaigns, humbled the proud Maratha chiefs to the dust, and their hope of founding a Maratha Empire vanished like a dream. As a result of the second war, Wellesley not only received from them valuable territories but also a strong hold on their future policy and action. Wellesley, however, did not rely on military victories alone to expand and consolidate British dominions. He also annexed many smaller states, like the Carnatic, Tanjore and Surat. The rulers were compelled to surrender their administrative powers to the Company and had to rest content with empty titles and 'guaranteed pensions'.

It is mainly with the help of the Indian soldiers that the British conquered Mysore and defeated the Marathas. The man-power of England was very limited, and the British could never have hoped to establish or expand their power in India save with the help of the sepoys. So we find Clive forming the first battalion of sepoys before the battle of Palasi (Plassy). They took part in this battle, and after the conquest of Bengal the British steadily pursued the policy of enlisting more and more regiments of sepoys. "At the close of Dalhousie's administration (A.D. 1856) the Native troops amounted to two hundred and thirty-three thousand men; while, to watch this gigantic army, there were only forty-five thousand three hundred and twenty-two European soldiers of all arms."[2]

But the conquests of the British were as much due to success in arms as to their diplomacy. They formed coalition

with one Indian power against another and always succeeded in preventing a combination of Indian powers against them. They defeated the Sikhs, Gurkhas, and Pathans with the help of the Hindusthani sepoys, and when these mutinied, turned those very tribes against them. They gave autonomy to Native States to disarm suspicion and criticism, but used their rulers as so many puppets in their hands to do their bidding. This ensured the loyalty and allegiance of the people without any sacrifice of real power on the part of the British. The scheme by which this was effected was known as 'the Subsidiary Alliance', a system introduced by Lord Wellesley and systematically pursued by the British Government ever since. If the ruler of any State accepted this alliance he was allowed to retain autonomy in internal administration, but had to maintain a British army at his own expense, and his relations with other powers were completely controlled by the British Government. In return, the latter guaranteed the security and integrity of the dominions of the ally. It was a master stroke of policy by which the British could, and did, extend their sovereignty over numerous States under a thin disguise. The Nizam of Hyderabad was the first to accept it in A.D. 1798, and within a few years both the Peshwa and the Gaekwar of Baroda also entered into a similar alliance. As we shall see, Avadh was also placed in the same, if not a still worse, position by Wellesley. Thus before fifty years had passed since the Battle of Palasi, the British authority was established over a large part of India.

Wellesley's policy reached its logical conclusion, and the British supremacy extended over nearly the whole of India, during the next quarter of a century. The Gurkha State of Nepal was humbled in 1814-15, and became a subordinate ally of the British. The Maratha Powers were finally liquidated by the Third Maratha War in 1817-19. The dominions of Peshwa, the titular head of the Maratha Empire, were annexed to the British dominions, and he settled in Bithur near Kanpur on an annual pension. The Bhonsle of Nagpur,

Sindhia of Gwalior, and Holkar of Indore had to accept subsidiary alliance. The proud Rajput chiefs were also placed in a similar position by entering into treaties of "defensive alliance, perpetual friendship, protection and subordinate co-operation" with the East India Company. As most of the States under Indian rulers at the time of the Mutiny were governed under this system of subsidiary alliance, it is necessary to say something about the condition of the people and the rulers under it.

In the first place, the system of administration was bound to suffer when the British Government held the power without responsibility, and the rulers had to discharge onerous responsibility without the requisite power. It was admitted by eminent British statesmen that the system had the inevitable effect of deteriorating the moral and material condition of the people, for the rulers were freed from the only real check against the use of arbitrary power, viz. popular outbreak, by the military protection and security guaranteed to them by the British.

The effect of the subsidiary alliance on the personal character of the ruling prince was equally deplorable. Having surrendered all powers of resistance against the paramount power, he became a mere tool in its hands. This authority naturally put a premium on absolute subordination, and therefore discounted personal ability, as these two are hardly compatible. The dependent ruling chief incurred the displeasure of his master if he showed any inclination to improving the state of things in his own dominions which might have even a remote chance of increasing his powers. Consequently he lost all initiative or incentive to administrative work, and was prone to indulge in luxury and debauchery.

That all this was part of a deliberate policy adopted by the British Government, is proved by a statement in the House of Commons by a Tory Under-Secretary of State for India about the punishment inflicted on the Senapati at Manipur. After referring to his ability, good character and

popularity, he went on to say that the Government of India had never encouraged men of that kind. "Governments," said he, "have always hated and discouraged independent and original talent, and they have always loved and promoted docile and unpretending mediocrity. This is not a new policy. It is as old as Tarquinius Superbus ; and although in these modern times we do not lop or cut off the heads of the tall poppies, we take other and more merciful means of reducing any person of dangerous political pre-eminence to a harmless condition"[3].

This was merely a blunt expression of a patent truth well known in India. The demoralisation brought about by this policy in the character of the ruling chiefs was a source of dismay and profound discontent, not only to the people concerned, but also to all those who cared for the welfare of India. If a ruling chief, in subsidiary alliance, gave evidence of the least sparks of ability or nobility in his character, he was almost sure of coming into collision with the paramount authority, which meant certain ruin. Having therefore only the choice between rushing headlong to destruction or debauchery, he resigned himself to his fate, sometimes preferring the one, sometimes the other. More often he remained in the background while his ministers or other high officers, either instigated by him or with his connivance, and sometimes even independently of him, hatched plots to free him from a galling yoke. The subsidiary alliance was thus a fruitful source of discontent and disturbance.

The great importance of Native States under 'subsidiary alliance' was realised by eminent British statesmen who regarded them as a source of strength rather than weakness[4]. They were regarded as break-waters to control currents of popular feelings against a foreign Government. Some were of opinion that if the whole of India were brought under the direct rule of the British, they would be at the mercy of the sepoys who might turn against them. Sleeman warned Dalhousie in writing 'that the annexation of Oude would...

inevitably lead to a mutiny of the sepoys'—a view which proved to be prophetic[5]. They, therefore, thought that the policy of annexation should be arrested and not accelerated. This policy of 'subsidiary alliance', therefore, held the ground for nearly half a century since it was formulated by Wellesley. Even when the army of Sindhia rose against the British in 1843, and was twice defeated, his State was not annexed, but allowed to continue as a Protected State. We shall see how this policy paid a rich dividend to the British during the dark days of the Mutiny. After the first Sikh War, when the whole kingdom lay prostrate before Lord Hardinge, he did not annex it. As a matter of fact, with the single exception of the Peshwa, the British Government followed the well-tried policy of subordinate alliance with all the Indian rulers during this period. But the policy was deliberately reversed by Lord Dalhousie who placed the coping stone over the mighty fabric of the British Empire in India. After the Second Sikh War in 1848-49 Dalhousie finally extinguished the power of the Sikhs and annexed the Panjab to the British Empire. Dalhousie did not believe in the theory of 'subsidiary alliance' and seized every opportunity to bring a native State, big or small, directly under the rule of the British power. The methods followed by him were more ignoble than those followed by his predecessors, because his victims were mostly helpless dependents of the British.

Among these special importance attaches to the annexation of several States by Dalhousie in pursuance of his famous or rather infamous 'doctrine of lapse.' This meant the denial to the adopted son of a native ruler the right to succeed to his adoptive father's estate or pension. We need not enter into the vexed and much debated question of the legality of this procedure. As Kaye puts it, "nothing is more certain than that the right (of adoption) was ever dearly prized by the Hindoos, and was not alienated from them by the Lord-Paramount who had preceded us".[6] There is equally little doubt that this 'doctrine of lapse' was universally

regarded in India as taking away a sacred right, sanctioned by immemorial custom, and was highly resented by all alike. As a result of this policy Dalhousie annexed the big State of Nagpur, and many smaller States like Satara, Jhansi, and Sambalpur, and deprived Nana Sahib of the annual allowance granted to his adoptive father, the Ex-Peshwa Baji Rao II. The ruler of Satara was the descendant of Sivaji, and Nagpur, ruled by the Bhonsles, was one of the five great Maratha principalities. Thus Dalhousie finally extinguished three of the great historic royal Maratha families. But if the annexation was unjust, it was carried out in some cases in the most offensive manner. The extinction of the Nagpur Raj was followed by a ruthless spoliation of the palace. "The live stock and dead stock of the Bonslah were sent to the hammer. It must have been a great day for speculative cattle dealers at Seetabaldee (suburb of Nagpur) when the royal elephants, horses, and bullocks were sold off at the price of carrion;...the venerable Bankha Baee (widow of the deceased Raja's grandfather), with all the wisdom and moderation of four score well-spent years upon her, was so stung by a sense of the indignity offered to her, that she threatened to fire the palace if the furniture were removed. But the furniture was removed, and the jewels of the Bonslah family, with a few propitiatory exceptions, were sent to the Calcutta market. And I have heard it said that these seizures, these sales, created a worse impression not only in Berar, but in the surrounding provinces, than the seizure of the kingdom itself."[7] It is no wonder that Nana Sahib and the Rani of Jhansi were in open rebellion, and both Nagpur and Satara showed strong symptoms of it during the dark days of the Mutiny.

As in the case of Nana, Dalhousie also applied the principle of lapse to other titles and pensions. As noted above, Carnatic and Tanjore were annexed by Wellesley, leaving only the title and pension to their rulers. These were now swept away by Dalhousie. He also proposed to

abolish the title of the nominal Delhi Emperor, but the decision was deferred by the Court of Directors till after the death of the then ruler.

But the most tyrannical act of Dalhousie was the annexation of Avadh. As this forms a vital question in any inquiry concerning the cause and character of the Sepoy Mutiny, it is necessary to give a more detailed account and a retrospective view of the British relation with Avadh.

In an evil moment, the Nawab of Avadh asked for the help of the British army in order io subdue the neighbouring State of Rohilkhand, governed by a confederacy of Rohilla (or Ruhela) chiefs under the leadership of Hafiz Rahmat Khan. Warren Hastings, the British Governor, being pressed for money, agreed, on payment of a large amount, to hire British troops to the Nawab. "Then', to use Macaulay's words, "the horrors of Indian war were let loose upon the fair valleys and cities of Rohilkhand."[8] Hafiz Rahmat was defeated and killed, and 20,000 Rohillas were expelled beyond the Ganga. Hastings has been strongly denounced by Burke, Macaulay and Mill for having deliberately sold the lives and liberties of a free people "and the honour of their wives and daughters", and condoned horrible atrocities on the part ot the armies of the Nawab of Avadh. As Macaulay remarked: "England now descended far below the level even of those petty German princes who, about the same time, sold us troops to fight the Americans". The British Government bartered away, for "shameful lucre", the independence of the Rohillas, a people who esteemed freedom above all and had done no harm to the British. By this iniquitous act they committed a crime which could never be forgiven or forgotten, and the Rohillas, who suffered this grievous wrong, belonged to the stock of the sturdy Pathans who never forget or forgive[9]. As we shall see, a terrible revenge was taken upon the British, eighty-three years later, by Khan Bahadur Khan, a descendant of Hafiz Rahmat Khan, when the Mutiny and revolt spread like wildfire in Rohilkhand.

But the nemesis was at work, and the policy of seeking the aid of British troops proved no less fatal to the Nawab of Avadh. The military aid, at first offered in an irregular, desultory kind, became a regular policy, and treaties were concluded by which the British provided a regular force for the internal and external defence of Avadh in return for a heavy subsidy. By subsequent treaties the subsidy became heavier, and as the misrule and extravagance of the Nawab left him no means to pay it, arrears accumulated. One bad step leads to another. Hastings, again pressed for money, helped the Nawab, or rather forced him, to extort money from his mother and grandmother. These ladies, the Begams of Avadh, had already paid to the Nawab more than fifty lakhs of rupees on a guarantee by the British Government that no further demands should be made upon them. But Hastings sent British troops to Fyzabad where the Begams lived—"and their eunuchs were compelled by imprisonment, starvation and threat, if not actual infliction, of flogging, to surrender the treasure in December, 1782[10]."

The people of Avadh suffered no less from the hopelessly corrupt and inefficient administration of the Nawab. In order to meet the extravagant luxury of the royal household and heavy loss of the exchequer through corruption, the revenue officials fleeced both the *Zamindars* and cultivators, and if any disorder or rebellion broke out, it was ruthlessly suppressed with the help of the subsidiary British troops, who were required more for internal than for external defence of Avadh.

Sometimes revenues of some districts were farmed to Englishmen, ex-officers of the Company, who imposed what was virtually a martial law for extorting as much as possible from the people. The tyrannical conduct of one of these, Hannay, exceeded all proportions. It is said that fathers sold their children to meet the demands of revenue, defaulters were confined in open cages, and masses of people left their fields before flying troops in pursuit of them[11].

Advantage was taken by the British Government of the death of every Nawab to wring more concessions from the new one. Thus Asafuddaulla, on his accession, had to agree to pay a larger subsidy. On his death in 1797, the British Government first set up and then set aside the nominated successor, Wazir Ali, in favour of Sadat Ali. The new Nawab agreed to pay a higher subsidy, ceded the fort of Allahabad, and bound himself not to hold communications with, or admit into his kingdom, any other Europeans. Wazir Ali, whose claim to the throne was rejected by the British, had undoubtedly a more vigorous and active personality than Sadat Ali, who became a subservient tool in the hands of the suzerain power. There is hardly any doubt that here, too, in the selection between the candidates, the British Governor-General followed the principle of Tarquinius Superbus mentioned above. Wazir Ali retired to Varanasi on an annual pension, but rose in rebellion, as we shall see later.

In spite of the hopeless financial condition of Avadh, Wellesley considerably increased the number of subsidiary troops, and the Nawab, pleading inability to pay the additional burden of fifty lakhs of Rupees, was forced to cede, in lieu of subsidy, Rohilkhand and Lower Doab, which comprised nearly half his dominions, by a new treaty concluded in 1801.

Avadh was thus in a much worse position than the Native States under subsidiary alliance. It suffered from the evils of both western administration and oriental despotism, with the blessings of none. It was inevitable that under the form of Double Government that prevailed, and the nonentity of the ruler fully ensured by the British, utter chaos and confusion would prevail in Avadh. But in reality, although there was hopeless corruption and a great deal of inefficiency, the general condition of the people was not so hopelessly bad as the British rulers and writers have alleged[12].

But even admitting the misrule of Avadh, which nobody could fully deny, it is not fair to hold the Nawab entirely responsible for it. The fault lay primarily in the heavy

exactions of the British by way of subsidy for troops, and the impact it produced on the whole system of administration. To quote again from Kaye:

"In truth it was a vicious system, one that can hardly be too severely condemned. By it we established a Double Government of the worst kind. The Political and Military Government was in the hands of the Company; the internal administration of Oude territories still rested with the Nawab-Wuzeer. In other words, hedged in and protected by the British battalions, a bad race of Eastern Princes were suffered to do, or not to do, what they liked. Under such influences it is not strange that disorder of every kind ran riot over the whole length and breadth of the land."[13]

Kaye had the candour to admit that the Nawab alone could not be blamed for the misrule in Avadh. "Whether the British or the Oude Government were more responsible for it was somewhat doubtful to every clear understanding and every unprejudiced mind."[14] But the British Government, at least Dalhousie, had no such doubt, and so Avadh was annexed, in the most arbitrary manner, on the ground of 'chronic misrule.' No other plea was available. The 'doctrine of lapse' could not obviously apply, as the Nawab Wajid Ali was still alive. Even his worst enemy could not charge him with any disaffection towards, far less any conspiracy against, the British. Bad rulers though they were, the Nawabs of Avadh had all along been staunch allies of the British, and stood by them in weal and woe with a zeal and loyalty which never wavered for a moment during the long period of more than ninety years. "False to their people—false to their manhood—they were true to the British Government."[15]

On February 4, 1856, the British Resident presented to Wajid Ali the letter from Dalhousie asking him formally to abdicate his sovereign functions and to make over, by a solemn treaty, the Government of his territories to the East India Company. The Nawab "received it with a passionate

burst of grief",[16] and taking the turban off from his head placed it in the hands of the Resident. But he refused to sign his own death-warrant in the shape of the proposed treaty. The Resident then issued a proclamation "declaring the province of Oudh to be henceforth, for ever, a component part of the British Indian Empire."[17] Thus did nemesis overtake the family of the Nawab who had robbed the Rohillas of their dominions with the help of the British soldiers.

As in the case of Nagpur, the annexation of Avadh was accompanied by needless acts of spoliation of a cruel and barbarous character. Various charges were brought which were thus summed up by Kaye:

"It was charged against us that our officers had turned the stately palaces of Lucknow into stalls and kennels, that delicate women, the daughters or the companions of Kings, had been sent adrift, homeless and helpless, that treasure houses had been violently broken open and despoiled, that the private property of the royal family had been sent to the hammer, and that other vile things had been done very humiliating to the King's people, but far more disgraceful to our own."[18]

Canning, the Governor-General, referred these charges to the Chief Commissioner of Avadh, but repeated reminders, and even admonitions, could not elicit any satisfactory explanation. It is, therefore, permissible to hold that the charges were substantially true, though this is denied by many British historians.

The deposition of the Nawab of Avadh and the introduction of the British system of administration very adversely affected all classes of people, and caused serious grievances and injuries to them such as normally followed almost every annexation of a new kingdom by the British. But whereas common convention condones many sufferings caused by a military conquest, as they are considered inevitable, there are less excuses, and therefore greater discontent and keener sense of resentment, where transfer of sovereignty is effected

more peaceably, and on grounds that are considered to be extremely unjust and iniquitous. In Avadh, as in most Native States in India, quite a large number of people lived on the bounty of the court. These ranged from highest aristocracy, related by ties of blood to the royal family, to the vulgar parasites who earned their livelihood by the extravagance, profligacy and licentiousness of the court. Between these two extremes were the numerous functionaries and tradesmen of the court, titled pensioners, and so forth. All these were ruined when the King vacated his throne. "Men and women of high birth, tenderly reared and luxuriously surrounded, were suddenly cast adrift on the world without the means of subsistence. Some warded off starvation by selling their shawls and trinkets."[19] "Families, which had never before been outside the Zenana, used to go out at night and beg their bread."[20] The Government order provided for this contingency, but the local officials made such inordinate delay in preparing the pension list, that untold hardships were caused to many before any steps were taken by Sir Henry Lawrence. 'Charity delayed is charity denied' proved unfortunately too true in many cases. The great land-holders of Avadh, generally known as *Talukdars*, suffered equally from the new policy of land-settlement, in which their rights were mostly ignored and direct engagements were made with village proprietors who had hitherto been content to occupy and to cultivate their lands under the old *Talukdars*. But the cultivators were also in great misery as the assessment was very high. The Chief Commissioner, in answer to the complaint made to the Governor-General, wrote in April, 1857, i.e. about a year after the annexation: "The revenue measures have been unsatisfactory. Reductions have been made to the amount of fifteen, twenty, thirty and even thirty-five per cent, showing how heavy was last year's assessment. The Talukdars have also, I fear, been hardly dealt with. At least in the Fyzabad Division they have lost half their villages—some have lost all".[21] To add insult to injury, many of the forts

possessed by the *Talukdars* were dismantled, and their armed retainers were disarmed and disbanded. Of the sixty thousand sepoys of Avadh, about a quarter was retained in service, but the rest, more than forty thousand in number, were cast adrift upon the province with small pensions or gratuities. The new system of taxation also proved irksome to all; heavy tax was laid upon opium, and "the prices of other necessaries were raised, if not by direct imposts, by contract systems, which had equally injurious effects". The "new judicial regulations, with their increased formalities, and delays, and expenses, were causing scarcely less uneasiness and scarcely less popular dislike of the new Government."[22]

The history of Avadh, ending with its annexation in 1856, reflects the different stages and modes of the growth of British dominions in India, and gives us a fair idea of the iniquities of the British Government as well as the sufferings, humiliation and the moral and material degradation of the princes and people in Native States involved in the process. The annexation of Avadh has been discussed in some details as it enables us to understand why it was mainly in Avadh alone that there was a general revolt of the civil population after the outbreak of the mutiny of Sepoys there in 1857-58. For, the annexation of Avadh alienated all classes of people,—the territorial aristocracy, the Muhammadan aristocracy, the military class serving under the Nawab, the British sepoys recruited in Avadh, the peasantry of the country, and the petty artisans of the town. "In a word, the annexation of Oudh converted a country, the loyalty of whose inhabitants to the British had become proverbial, into a hotbed of discontent and of intrigue."[23]

Further, the annexation of Avadh had a repercussion all over India. "It alienated the rulers of Native States, who saw in that act indulgence in a greed of power to be satiated neither by unswerving loyalty nor by timely advances of money on loan to the dominant power."[24] The rulers of

Native States, all over India, must have asked themselves the question, 'who could be safe, if the British thus treated one who had ever been their most faithful ally?"[25]

The practical application of the 'doctrine of lapse' and the annexation of Avadh created a feeling of uneasiness, discontent and strong resentment among the rulers and chiefs all over India. About the same time other policies, though less objectionable, produced the same effect upon other classes of people. The new system of land-settlement, eliminating all intermediate interests between the Government and the cultivators, destroyed the nobility and gentry over a large part of India. Although not originating with Dalhousie, the greatest practical exposition of the policy was the settlement of the North-West Provinces, including Avadh, during his regime. Similarly the resumption of lands, held for generations under rent-free tenures, though begun earlier, was pursued with relentless severity during the regime of Lord Dalhousie, and reduced to penury a large number of landholders who had believed that long years of possession were more valid than title-deeds. Many of them belonged to "high family, proud of their lineage, proud of their ancestral privileges, who had won what they held by the sword, and had no thought by any other means of maintaining possession".[26] An Act was passed in 1852 setting up the Inam Commission to inquire into the titles of land-owners, and during the five years preceding the Mutiny it confiscated more than twenty thousand estates in the Deccan.[27] While the landed nobility was thus seriously depressed and largely obliterated, the peasantry, which formed the bulk of the masses, groaned under excessive assessment, and the traders and artisans suffered heavily from the unfair competition with the British interests. It is this universal discontent and resentment, left as a legacy by Dalhousie, which, in the opinion of many, led to the great conflagration of 1857.

It is hardly necessary to add that, as a set-off against the evils of British rule enumerated above and described in

greater detail in the next chapter, there were many good features which distinguished it. If they are not mentioned here, it is not to minimise their importance, but simply because it is the main object of this chapter to show the predisposing causes of the great outbreak of 1857. In no age or country have the beneficent measures of administration, however great, been able to counteract the effect of evils from which the people suffer, and India proved no exception to the rule. Besides, some of these very features, such as the promotion of education, particularly on Western lines, the improved social legislation like the abolition of *Sati* and the legalisation of remarriage of widows, and the improved system of communication by railways, telegraph and post-offices, seriously disturbed the large majority of people who, far from appreciating them, regarded them as insidious attempts to convert the Indians, *en masse*, to Christianity. Even the introduction of comparative peace and order, in place of anarchy and confusion, was disliked by many sections who profited by the old state of things, and found their prospects and position seriously affected by the establishment of a stable and ordered government. Thus, curiously enough, not only the evils but even the good features of the British rule during the first century contributed to the ferment which led to the outbreak of 1857. In conclusion, it may be added that many Indians honestly felt that the evils of the British rule far outweighed its blessings. It is beyond the scope of this book to discuss how far the view was right, but the feeling was there and produced its natural results.

FOOTNOTES

1. "Elphinstone (*Cabul*, II. 308) states that Shah Zaman was exhorted to undertake his expedition of 1795 by a refugee prince of Delhi, and encouraged in it by Tipu Sultan. The journey of Ghulam Mohammad, the defeated Rohilla Chief, and the mission of the Wazir of Oudh are given on the authority of the Bahawalpur family annals, and from the same source may be added an interchange of deputations, on the part of Shah Zaman and Sindhia, the envoys, as in the other instance, having passed through Bahawalpur town. A suspicion of the complicity of Asaphuddaula of Lucknow does not seem to have occurred to the English historians who rather dilate on the exertions made by their Government to protect their pledged ally from the northern invaders. Nevertheless, the statements of the Bahawalpur chronicles on the subject seem in every way credible." Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, p. 177 f.n.

2. Holmes, 62.

3. Hansard, series 3; Vol. 354, p. 567.

4. K, I. 80.

5. Sleeeman's view is quoted in K, I. 136 f. n.; for Sleeman's warning cf. *THG*. 382.

6. K, I. 71.

7. K, I. 83-4.

8. *Essay on Warren Hastings*. Macaulay continues: "The whole country was in a blaze. More than a hundred thousand people fled from their homes to pestilential jungles........." Although the number is an obvious exaggeration, the description is substantially correct.

9. Macaulay observes: "Even at this day valour and self-respect and a bitter remembrance of the great crime of England distinguish that noble Afghan race."

10. *Advanced History of India* by R. C. Majumdar and others, p. 696.

11. There is no doubt that the Nawab was forced to appoint such English officers. He threatened to abdicate the throne when there was a talk of reappointing Hannay. Cf. Mill, IV. 313-4.

12. Cf. *HCIP*, Vol. IX, p. 301.

13. K, I. 113-4.

14. K, I. 126.

15. K, I. 118.

16. K, I. 148.

17. K, I. 151.

18. K, I. 404-5.

19. K, I. 419.
20. K, I. 420 f. n.
21. K, III. 429.
22. K, III. 426.
23. M, I, 349.
24. Ibid., 348.
25. K, I. 152.
26. K, I. 176.
27. Holmes, pp. 40-41.

CHAPTER II

DISCONTENT AND DISAFFECTION

In view of what has been said above, it can hardly be a matter of surprise that the rapid expansion of the British dominions during the century that elapsed after the Battle of Palasi (Plassy) left a blazing trail of discontent and disaffection throughout India. But these were intensified to a considerable degree by many other consequences of the British rule which vitally affected the material and moral life of the people. We can only briefly refer to them under a few broad heads, referring the more inquisitive readers to standard texts on the subject.[1]

1. DISCONTENT DUE TO ECONOMIC CAUSES

a. *Ruin of Trade and Industry*

The first evil consequence of the British rule in Bengal was the economic exploitation of the country. Both Mir Jafar and Mir Kasim had to pay heavy amounts for their elevation to the throne, not only to the East India Company, but also to their high officials, like Governors and Members of the Council, as personal gratuities.

In addition to this Bengal suffered heavily from the private inland trade of the servants of the Company. Monopolies were established, not only of every article of trade, but even of the necessaries of life, by a shameless discrimination against the natives who were subjected to inland duties. This pernicious practice of underselling the native in his own market, opened a scene of the most cruel oppression, and sowed the seeds of deepest disgust and bitterness to the rule of the merchants in the minds of the people.

The letters of Richard Barwell show that he reared a colossal fortune for himself by trade of all kinds. Similarly

Scrafton charged Vansittart of vast illegal acquisitions. All this caused a heavy drain of money from India which ruined its economic prosperity.

The evils of this wholesale commercial exploitations have been described by many contemporary writers, both Indian and European, and need not be described in detail. They caused enormous drain of wealth from India and an almost wholesale destruction of her industry.

b. *Oppressive Agrarian Policy*

The ruin of trade and industry, the gravest of the evils resulting from early British rule in Bengal, did not, however, stand alone. The peasants, cultivators, as well as the *Zamindars* were equally ruined by the new policy adopted by the East India Company for the administration of the land revenue in Bengal.

The Permanent Settlement, introduced by Lord Cornwallis, ultimately secured to a large extent peace and prosperity in Bengal, as compared with the miserable state of things during the earlier period. But to begin with, it produced many evils. The inexorable sale law against the defaulting *Zamindars*, in its ruthless course, unsettled many hereditary *Zamindars* from their social and economic moorings. Great landholders and semi-royal families were more or less completely ruined, and that, too, in some cases, for a temporary difficulty.

But if the Permanent Settlement ruined the old *Zamindars*, it was equally ruinous to the *ryots*. It did not afford them that protection to which they were entitled by the declarations of Lord Cornwallis. It made no sufficient provision for the ascertainment of the rights which it proposed to secure for the *ryots* by their *pottahs*, so that it too often happened that the amount of rent which they paid was regulated neither by specific engagements, nor by the established rates of the *parganas*.

As in Bengal, oppressions and miseries also prevailed in

other parts of Company's territories in India. In Madras, the Northern Circars were the earliest possessions of the British. But here, unlike Bengal, there were hereditary proprietors of big estates, who functioned as 'Captains of the Borders' and 'Lords of the Marches'. But the introduction of periodical settlements for short periods, with increase of assessments from time to time, sometimes as high as fifty per cent., reduced the whilom proprietors to the position of mere farmers of revenue, liable to ejectment for default of revenue, and subject to new rules and regulations with which they were quite unfamiliar. They were also deprived of the effective authority which they were accustomed to exercise for the maintenance of law and order. All this created a chaotic condition, and generated a spirit of insubordination and rebellion, which caused a series of risings of the civil population. Although Permanent Settlement was also introduced in these regions, it failed to improve the condition due to over-assessment and the sale-laws, involving the ruin of the old *Zamindars* as in Bengal.

In the Carnatic large territories were in the hands of the Poligars or local military chiefs who, subject to certain services, were *de facto* independent barons within their jurisdiction. The annexation of the Carnatic brought them under the British rule, but they resisted the British system with violent means, and broke out into open rebellion in North Arcot in 1803-5. They were driven out and all the Poligar estates were resumed.

The Ryotwari system introduced in many parts of Madras also caused great hardship to the cultivators by the very heavy assessment which the *Ryot* was forced to pay in full even in case of the failure of crops, and by the denial of all kinds of private rights in land hitherto possessed by certain classes. The 'Village System', which was tried in some areas meant a contract for the total assessment due from a village, which was fixed by the Government. But the assessment in most cases was very heavy, and as all the surplus rent went

to the contractor, unauthorised exactions were levied upon the inferior peasantry. This scared away the cultivators to other villages where they were attracted by better terms offered by rival contractors. The result was a constant migration of peasants and the decay or ruin of many flourishing villages.

Both these systems were also tried in Bombay, but with the same deplorable result due to heavy assessment. As Malcolm says, there were "loud and almost universal complaints, in many districts and villages, against what they deemed oppression and injustice ; and in several cases the inhabitants of districts and villages have left their homes to seek the Governor of Bombay in a body, abandoning their wives and children, and their homes for several months to obtain relief from what they deemed injustice."[2]

The periodical settlements for short terms ending in the Mahalwari settlement in the North-West Provinces caused a great deal of sufferings to the cultivators and landholders who had to pay as tax two-thirds of the net produce, the quantity of which was fixed by guess work.

Side by side with the vexatious systems of land-settlement the iniquitous process of the resumption of lands was another source of social discontent and unsettlement. By the rule of 1793 the Collectors were authorized to recover by a regular law-suit rent-free lands held without a valid tenure. By new Regulations passed in 1811 and subsequent years such lands could be resumed by the Collectors on their own authority, leaving the aggrieved parties to file suits in law-courts, if they so desired, to recover their lands. Regulation III of 1828 provided for the appointment of special Commissioners for the investigation of titles to rent-free lands. Regulation V of 1831 stopped the practice of granting Inams or assignment of land-revenue in perpetuity, and in 1845 the tenure of such grants was restricted to existing lives[3]. During the five years before the outbreak of the Mutiny, the Inam Commission at Bombay, appointed by lord Dalhousie to investigate the titles

of land-owners, confiscated some 20,000 estates in the Deccan, as already stated above.[4]

2. DISCONTENT DUE TO SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS CAUSES

The social intercourse with the British soon grew to be another source of discontent among the Indians. The attitude of a conquering people to the conquered is bound to be arrogant or condescending in most cases, and the Englishmen formed no exception. From the very beginning of the British rule the unsociable character of the Englishmen offended the sensibilities of the Indians. Writing in 1780 A D., the author of the *Seir Mutaqherin* complained that 'the English seldom visit or see any of us'. There were some special reasons for bitterness in the relation between the two communities. Englishmen in general regarded the Indians as barbarians, and the Christian missionaries held in open contempt the idolatrous practices of the Hindus. Warren Hastings wrote in 1784 that 'a few years ago most of the Englishmen regarded the Indians almost as barbarians, and though the feeling has decreased it has not entirely disappeared'. The truth of this is proved by a book written in 1792 by Charles Grant, an officer of the East India Company, in which he remarks that Bengal hardly possesses any honest and conscientious men such as are to be found even in the most backward countries of Europe. He then proceeds to give a long list of the defects of Indian character. Even so late as 1855, a most slanderous libel on Bengali character in the most objectionable language, was published in the *Calcutta Review*. The Englishmen could, and not unoften did, inflict all kinds of insult and humiliation upon the Indians, and assaulted and sometimes killed them, practically with impunity.[6] This arrogant spirit of the Englishmen was a cause of bitter resentment against them.

The right of unrestricted entry of Christian missionaries to India was conceded by the Charter of 1813. The mission-

aries, in their schools and religious tracts, poured forth venomous abuses against the Hindus, and this considerably estranged the relation between the two communities. In particular, the conversion of Hindus to Christianity—by force or fraud as the Hindus thought—embittered the relations, sometimes almost to a breaking point. There was a general dread among the Indians that it was the deliberate policy of the British Government to convert them *en masse* to Christianity.[54]

The bitter controversy over the so-called Black Acts of 1849 strained the relations between the two communities. The Europeans now began to show those signs of aloofness from Indians which culminated in almost a complete isolation after the Mutiny of 1857.

3. DISCONTENT DUE TO ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM

The masses in Bengal did not revolt against the English nor showed any disaffection to them when they first obtained political power in Bengal. As a matter of fact the people even welcomed the English rule. But gradually there grew a feeling of aversion against them, not so much on the ground that they were foreigners, as on account of the evils of their administration. This sentiment is expressed by Syed Ghulam Hussein Khan in various places in the *Seir Mutaqherin*, composed in A. D. 1780.

In support of his general condemnation of the Company's rule in India he has given a long list of grievances, under twelve different heads, against the British administration. The most important of these may be summed up as follows:

i. The English officials are not accessible, and so people cannot place their grievances before them. (The author refers to the humiliating treatment of even respectable persons by the head Harkara of the English officials who must be satisfied before anybody is allowed to see his master).

ii. The difference in language and customs between the English and the Indians.

iii. The system of impersonal administration with which the Indians were not familiar. The lack of personal element in administration is held responsible for many evils such as slowness of proceedings, delay in taking action, frequent changes of policy, etc.

iv. The English have deprived the inhabitants of India of the 'various branches of commerce and benefit which they had ever enjoyed before.' They are, for example, no longer enlisted in the army to the same extent as before, and that causes a great hardship to many.

v. Partiality of the English to their own countrymen, and even to their dependents.

vi. The strange character of their laws and judicial procedure.[5b]

The views of Ghulam Hussein Khan, who wrote at the beginning of English administration, are repeated in clearer and more forceful language by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in 1860. He regards the non-admission of Indians into the legislative and administrative branches of the Government of India as the primary cause of the Mutiny of 1857, the others being merely incidental or arising out of it.[6] He rightly points out that the permanence and prosperity of the Government depend on an accurate knowledge of the manners, customs, usages, habits, hopes and aspirations, temper and ability of the people of India. But the foreign Government cannot possess such knowledge until the people are allowed to participate in the administration of the country. He also very shrewdly observes that if there were Indian members in the Legislative Council, there would have been less misunderstanding, on the part of the people, of the real ideas and attitude of the Government, and a more accurate knowledge, on the part of the rulers, of the real feelings of the people

towards the various legislative and administrative measures of the Government.

Syed Ahmad Khan also refers to the exclusion of natives from high appointments under the Government as a source of profound discontent and disaffection, particularly among the Muhammadans, who had until recent times held such positions of trust and dignity, and being unaccustomed to trade and commerce, depended mostly upon service as means of their livelihood[7].

Syed Ahmad also severely condemns the lack of cordiality shown by the Englishmen towards the Indians, and in particular the officials treating the Indians with contempt[8]. "Their pride and arrogance," says he, "led them to consider the natives of India as undeserving the name of human beings[9]." Such ill treatment, he observes, was "more offensive to Muslims who for centuries past have received special honour and enjoyed special immunities in Hindusthan[10]."

Syed Ahmad also criticizes the administrative and judicial procedure, so foreign to the Indians, and cites as an example the imposition of tax on justice in the shape of stamps. He observes that all classes of Indians were greatly dissatisfied with the strange laws and procedures and the system of administration introduced by the English in India[11].

4. DISCONTENT AND DISAFFECTION OF THE SEPOYS

The discontent and disaffection against the British *Raj* were by no means confined to the civil population, but also extended to the Indian section of the army of the East India Company. In order to explain this, it is necessary to begin with a short account of the Company's army.

The East India Campany's army in India consisted of two sections,—one, in which both officers and rank and file were Englishmen, and the other, in which the commissioned officers were all British, but the rank and file, known as

sepoys (anglicised from *Sipahi*, meaning soldier), and junior officers, subordinate to the lowest class of English officers, were recruited from various parts of India.

The armies of Bombay, Madras and Bengal were at first independent of one another, each under its own Commander-in-Chief. But towards the close of the eighteenth century the Bengal army became the army of the Central Government, and its Commander-in-Chief became the head of Company's military establishment in India.

As the British dominions extended in all directions, need was felt of additional troops outside the regular cadre. This led to the recruitment of troops who had proved their high military qualities while fighting against the British. Thus irregular battalions of Gurkhas and Sikhs were raised, respectively, after the Nepal and Sikh wars.

In addition to regular and irregular troops maintained by the Company, there were troops maintained by the Indian rulers under the terms of the Subsidiary Alliance, mentioned above, or separate treaties. These were maintained at the expense of the Indian rulers who paid in cash or by cession of territories, but were officered by the British and for all practical purposes formed part of the Company's army. For, although theoretically the Subsidiary Forces or Special Contingents were intended for the service of the States concerned, they were freely used in all the wars of the Company.

The sepoys or Indian soldiers for the Bombay and Madras armies were generally recruited from the Moplahs and other Muslims, Hindus from Mangalore and Tellicherri, Tamils, and Telugus, more popularly known as the Tilingas. The name, 'Bengal Army,' was somewhat a misnomer, for Bengal had little or nothing to do with the personnel of the army. The sepoys of the Bengal Army were chiefly high-caste Hindus (mainly Brahmans and Rajputs) and Jats of Upper India, and sturdy Pathans from the north-western part of the country. The dominant elements, forming a majority, belonged to the State now known as Uttar Pradesh, specially Avadh, which,

until 1856, was an independent kingdom, at least in name and form.

The first battalion of sepoys was formed by Clive shortly before the Battle of Palasi and took part in it. They had a brilliant record of service under the Company for a century. They were held in high esteem, and many regarded them as "the finest soldier, tallest, best-formed, and of the noblest presence". There were native officers in command of the sepoys, but they were subordinate to European officers, of whom there were three in each battalion comprising about one thousand men. In course of time, however, the native officers lost their real power by the inclusion of more Englishmen. "An English subaltern was appointed to every company, and the native officer then began to collapse into something little better than a name".[12] The army thus offered no career to the gentry and aristocracy. "The native service of the Company came down to a dead level of common soldiering, and rising from the ranks by painfully slow process to merely nominal command".[13] Thenceforth the soldiers were recruited from the lower strata of society, though in the Bengal Army the sepoys were chiefly of high caste. The sepoys naturally smarted under a sense of unjustified inferiority. "Though he might give signs of the military genius of a Hyder, he knew that he could never attain the pay of an English subaltern, and that the rank to which he might attain, after some thirty years of faithful service, would not protect him from the insolent dictation of an ensign fresh from England."[14]

So the sepoys always nursed a strong sense of resentment at their low scale of salary and poor prospects of promotion, neither of which in their opinion had any real correspondence to their worth, particularly when contrasted with those of their British colleagues. The difference was scandalous to a degree. Moreover, 'the European corps took no share in the rough ordinary duties of the service..... ...They were lodged, fed, and paid in a manner unknown to other soldiers. This contrast could not but adversely affect the sepoys' morale.'

"It has been contended that though his pay was small the sepoy was financially well off because his needs were few and his standard of living was low. But the first few months' pay had to be spent in illegal gratifications. Sitaram, a sepoy, says in his autobiography that the drill Havildar and the European sergeant of his company took a dislike to him because he had not paid the usual fee. 'This fee was Rs. 16/-, some five or six of which went to the European sergeant of the company the recruit was posted to.' He adds that 'seven rupees a month will not support either Punjabee, Sikh or Mussulman.' But this remark applied to the post-mutiny period when prices had gone up. In the easier days before the Mutiny the sepoy did not fare better. We learn from a Bengali clerk attached to the cavalry regiment at Bareilly in 1857 that the sepoys had to pay for his uniform and he bought his daily ration on credit from the bania in the regimental bazar. On the pay day his account was settled and after the deduction for his ration etc., the balance was paid to him. Some sepoys got at the end of the month no more than a rupee or a rupee and a half, in other case the monthly saving did not exceed a few annas. His daily meal consisted of dal and roti, and with his limited credit he could not indulge in any luxuries except an occasional dish of Taro. His life was hard indeed, for the maximum pay that he could expect did not exceed nine rupees unless he was promoted, and promotion went by seniority and not by merit. The sowar was not much better off than the sepoy, for the former's pay varied from twenty-one to thirty rupees and many more deductions were made therefrom".[15] The feeling of the sepoys is reflected in many of the proclamations issued during the Mutiny. "We have ungrudgingly shed our blood in the service of our foreign masters, complained the disaffected sepoys, we have conquered for them kingdom after kingdom until nothing remained to be annexed within the four corners of the country, but what has been the return ?—spoliation of our people, degradation of our princes, and worst of all,—

inconceivable insults to our religion".[16] It would appear from these proclamations that the sepoys were influenced by all the causes which provoked discontent and disaffection among the civil population of all classes, as described in the previous sections. This is only quite natural, because they and the members of their families formed part and parcel of the civil population. In particular, they felt keenly the inferiority of the Indians in public service and the insult to their religion.

In spite of their material grievances in respect of pay and allowance, and the prevailing spirit of discontent and disaffection which they shared with the civil population, the sepoys, generally speaking, remained faithful to their masters. But extreme measures on the part of the authorities had occasionally provoked them to mutiny. One of the most serious, which bears a very close resemblance to the mutiny of 1857 so far as the genesis is concerned, was the mutiny at Vellore in 1806. It was caused by what the sepoys regarded as an affront to their religion. When new regulations were introduced in the Madras Army, forbidding the men to put the marks of caste upon their foreheads, ordering them to shave off their beards, and compelling them to exchange their old turbans for new ones with leather cockades, the Indian soldiers broke into mutiny at Vellore which, with the backing of the members of the exiled family of Tipu Sultan who lived there, threatened to assume serious proportions. This was in 1806, almost exactly half a century before the great mutiny of 1857. Midway between the two, there was a mutiny of sepoys at Barrackpur in 1824 during the First Burmese War. In view of its great importance it requires a somewhat detailed description.

About the middle of the year 1824, the 47th Native Infantry had arrived at Barrackpur in order to take part in some of the operations of the Burmese War. Disputes at once arose regarding the provision of carriages for taking the personal belongings of the sepoys. It was customary for the

sepoys to defray the expenses themselves, but on the present occasion bullocks could not be hired and they could only be purchased at extravagant prices. The sepoys, therefore, applied for assistance, but this was refused. This highly irritated the sepoys and they began to manifest their grievances in many ways. In the parade held on October 30, 1824, they appeared without their knapsacks and refused to bring them even when asked to do so, on the ground that they were unfit for use. A part of the regiment then declared that they would not proceed to Rangoon or elsewhere by sea and they would not move at all unless they were to have double *batta*. The Commanding Officer, unable to subdue the discontent, dismissed the regiment and proceeded to Calcutta to consult the Commander-in-Chief. After his return he held a parade on November 1. At this parade the sepoys burst into acts of open violence. The same mutinous spirit also affected the other regiments which were stationed at Barrackpur, preparatory to their proceeding on service. The Commander-in-Chief, therefore, brought in European troops from Calcutta, and in the next parade, when the sepoys refused to comply with the order "to ground arms," the European soldiers fired against them from a battery in their rear. A Calcutta letter, dated 3 November, 1824, published in the *Glasgow Herald*, gives a graphic description of what followed:

"About 410 held out......Sir Edward Paget gave orders to fire. In a moment after, grape shot and cannon bullets played upon the poor fellows from all quarters; they then threw down their arms and ran; some escaped by running into Hooghly—some were taken prisoners—upwards of 60 lay dead upon the field, and this afternoon about a dozen or two are either to be hanged or shot."[17] As stated in the letter, the rebel troops speedily broke and fled in every direction, but many were taken prisoners. They were tried by a Court Martial and a large number were sentenced to death. A large number of death sentences were, however, commuted to

imprisonment with hard labour. The native officers, although not active participators in the rebellion, were dismissed from the service and the number of the regiment was erased from the list of the army. It may be mentioned here that many persons at that time believed that the want of bullocks and carriages was not the real cause of the mutiny and that actually it was the result of many other grievances among which two were the most important, namely, (1) their having been required to embark on board a ship, and (2) the unjust influence of the Havildar Major with regard to the promotion of the non-commissioned officers in the battalion. The petition, which the sepoys made to the Commander-in-Chief, shows that their main, if not the only, grievance was that they were asked to embark on board ship, and that all the sepoys swore by the Ganges-water and *tulsi*-plant that they would never put their foot in a ship. It has been held by experienced military officers that the destruction of the British detachment at Ramu spread "alarm throughout the native army, and its effect was to damp the spirit, if not to shake the fidelity, of the native troops." The Burmese War was very unpopular, and the prospect of fighting in a country of marsh and jungle was undoubtedly dreaded by the sepoys. The Calcutta letter, referred to above, adds: "By the accounts received yesterday from Rangoon we have received a check; the sepoys did not fight with the same spirit as formerly; they lay down before the enemy, and would neither fight nor run away." It is also a fact that all classes of camp-followers had taken advantage of this circumstance and forced the Government to pay remuneration on much higher scale than usual. The sepoys, therefore, regarded themselves as entitled to partake of advantages "so lavishly and indiscriminately bestowed on men" whom they regarded as inferiors. These were the real causes to which they added bad knapsacks, want of carriages and irregular promotion, etc., which were merely contributory causes.

But whatever might have been the causes, the mutiny at

Barrackpur in November. 1824, made a deep impression upon the sepoys, and the memory of the martyrs for the cause of religion was long cherished by them with reverence. This was brought to light in the issue of the *Englishman* of Calcutta, dated May 30, 1857.[18] In view of the very interesting light it throws on the revolutionary mentality of the sepoys, the extract may be quoted in full:

"A circumstance has come to our knowledge which, unless it had been fully authenticated, we could scarcely have believed to be possible, much less true.

"When the Mutiny at Barrackpore broke out in 1824, the ringleader, a Brahmin of the 27th Regiment Native Infantry, was hanged on the edge of the tank where a large tree now stands, and which was planted on the spot to commemorate the fact. This tree, sacred Banian, is pointed to by the Brahmins and others to this day, as the spot where an unholy deed was performed, a Brahmin hanged.

"This man was at the time considered in the light of a martyr and his brass *pootah* or worshipping utensils, consisting of small trays, incense-holders, and other brass articles used by Brahmins during their prayers, were carefully preserved and lodged in the quarter-guard of the Regiment, where they remain to this day; they being at this moment in the quarter-guard of the 43rd Light Infantry at Barrackpore.

"These relics, worshipped by the sepoys, have been for thirty-two years in the safe-keeping of Regiments, having by the operation of the daily relief of the quarter-guard, passed through the hands of 2,33,600 men, and have served to keep alive, in the breasts of many, the recollection of a period of trouble, scene of Mutiny and its accompanying swift and terrible punishment which, had these utensils not been present to their sight as confirmation, would probably have been looked upon as fables, or at the most as very doubtful stories."

Such memories and memorials were undoubtedly important factors in the outbreak of the mutiny in 1857.

About a year later disturbances broke out in Assam. On the morning of 14 October, 1825, the Grenadier Company refused to march on the pretext of bad climate. When the ringleaders were seized and put in confinement, all the other sepoys demanded that they, too, should be confined with them. The Court Martial sentenced all the ringleaders to death; the other sepoys were paid and discharged.

On 24 November, 1838, occurred the first of a series of incipient mutinies owing to non-payment of full *batta* (additional or special allowance). The native regiment at Sholapur at first did not join the parade, but later turned out when the Infantry and Horse Artillery marched towards them. One man in each ten was punished—they were discharged after suffering imprisonment for two years. The non-payment of *batta* led to the mutiny of sepoys in Secunderabad, Hyderabad, Malligaum and Kotah in the Sagar Division in 1842. Some of the regiments were disbanded and the rest were pardoned.

In 1839 symptoms of disaffection could be clearly seen among the sepoys who were taken to Afghanistan during the First Afghan War. The Hindu sepoys fancied that they had lost their caste, for they had to cross the Sindhu and go outside India, which was forbidden by religion; they had to forego their daily bath, take their bread from Muslims, and to wear jackets made of sheep-skin. They, therefore, became disgusted and highly dissatisfied, but kept quiet, determined to ventilate their grievances and discontent when suitable opportunity occurred. The Muslim sepoys were dissatisfied as they had to fight against men of their own faith. Actually a Muslim Subadar and a Hindu Subadar were, respectively, shot dead and dismissed for expressing these sentiments. These punishments further excited the sepoys.[19]

The same mutinous spirit was also displayed by the sepoys on many occasions due to discontent caused by breach of faith on the part of the Government in respect of their allowances.

"During the first Afghan War General Pollock had paid his troops a special *batta* when they crossed the Indus. This was treated as a precedent and the sepoy expected similar inducements when he was called upon to undergo the hardship of trans-Indus employment. But in 1843 Sind had been annexed and become an integral part of the British Indian empire. The sepoy could not, therefore, legally claim any special compensation for serving in an Indian province, however distant it might be from his usual station. This was a piece of legal casuistry he could not understand. The Indus was still there, life in Sind was as hard as it had been in 1842, and if his claim was legitimate in 1842, how could it lose its validity in 1844 ?"[20]

The 64th Regiment acccordingly marched towards Sindh, the sepoys being under the impression that they would receive all the benefits which their predecessors had enjoyed. On the pay day they were disillusioned and broke into violence. They threw stones and brickbats at their officers and even belaboured them. Thirty-nine ringleaders were arrested, of whom six were executed, seven imprisoned for life, and the rest, save one, sentenced to various terms of imprisonment.

The 34th N. I. and three other regiments also refused to proceed to Sindh unless the old pecuniary benefits were restored. The 34th regiment was taken to Meerut, and in the presence of other troops, its arms and accoutrements were taken away and it was disbanded. After this example the other sepoys agreed to march to Sindh unconditionally.

One important point in all these grievances was the unanimous complaint of the sepoys of the 64th regiment that they had been deceived by the Commanding Officer, and it was proved that they were persuaded to go to Sindh on the temptation held out to them of receiving full *batta*. It is significant also that the Commanding Officer was removed, thereby proving the truth of the allegation. "But the damage done was irreparable. The sepoy found that he could trust his officers no more. No wonder that when the crisis came

in 1857 the assurances of Commanding Officers had little or no weight with him[21]".

Similarly, the 6th Madras Cavalry, when sent to Jubbulpore in 1843, was given to understand that their stay there would be short, but actually they were permanently stationed there on a lower allowance.

After the refusal of the Bengal Army to go to Sindh without special allowance, some infantry regiments were induced to go there on the guarantee of the Governor of Madras, who was also their Commander-in-Chief, that they would be entitled to the same allowances as granted for service in Burma. But when the troops had proceeded far they learnt that the additional allowance promised by the Governor could not be sanctioned as it was contrary to Bengal Regulations. The sepoys strongly resented these cruel breaches of faith and made violent demonstrations. Court Martial was held and a large number of sepoys were punished. What was still more important, the sepoys took to heart the lesson they learnt, namely that no reliance can be placed upon promises made by the Government[22].

Mutinous spirit was also displayed in 1849 by the sepoys belonging to the army of occupation in the Panjab. Towards the end of that year Sir Charles Napier collected "evidence which, in his judgement, proved that twenty-four regiments were only waiting for an opportunity to rise[23]". An incipient mutiny at Wazeerabad was suppressed in time, but a mutiny broke out at Govindgarh. On the first day of February, 1850, the native infantry there refused to take off their accoutrements and demanded to be discharged at once. Though they were pacified after some time, they armed themselves without any order the very next morning, and as it was feared that they wanted to occupy the fort, the European troops suddenly attacked them and order was restored. Ninety-five sepoys were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment and the whole regiment was disbanded. Though Napier suppressed the mutiny, he sympathized with the

mutineers and restored a regulation by which the sepoys were granted compensation for dearness of provisions at a higher rate. For this he was reprimanded by Dalhousie, the Governor-General, and resigned his post in disgust[24].

FOOTNOTES

1. Cf. *HCIP.*, Vol. IX, Chapter XIII.
2. *SB*-I, 42.
3. *HCIP.*, IX, 371-2.
4. See p. 18.
5. Numerous instances of this have been discussed in *HCIP*, Vol. X, Chapter XLVI.

5a. This point has been fully discussed in Book IV, Chapter III.

5b. *Seir Mutaqherin*, Translated by N. Raymond, Vol. III, pp. 190 ff.

6. *SAK.*, 10 ff.
7. Ibid., 43.
8. Ibid., 37.
9. Ibid., 42.
10. Ibid., 43.
11. Ibid., 29.
12. K, I. 24.
13. Ibid , 211-2.
14. Holmes, 49.
15. Sen, 21-22.
16. Ibid., 1.
17. *SB*-II, p. 2.
18. I am indebted to Dr. S. B. Chaudhuri for this reference.
19. Cf. Book IV, Chapter III.
20. Sen, 18.
21. Ibid., 19.
22. Ibid.
23. Holmes, 57.
24. Ibid. For details, cf. Lee-Warner, *Life of Lord Dalhousie*, I. 329 ff.

CHAPTER III

RESISTANCE AGAINST THE BRITISH

The discontent and disaffection manifested themselves in open acts of defiance, not unoften leading to active rebellions which sometimes assumed serious proportions. The more important of these are clearly traceable to political grievances. Many outbreaks were, however, of a mixed character; originating in agrarian discontent or other economic causes, they were gradually fed by religious frenzy or unbridled passions of primitive tribes, ultimately taking a political turn and ending in a furious revolt against the British. But whatever the motive or the outcome of these risings, they show a continual upsurge of a popular character against the British authority, almost throughout the first century of the British rule in India. It is neither possible nor necessary to describe them in detail, or even to refer to them all, but a few typical instances may be mentioned below.[1]

We may arrange them under the following classes according to the primary causes of their origin.

1. Political.
   (a). Personal grievances.
   (b). Reaction against British conquest.
   (c). Misrule in Protected States.
2. Economic.
3. Religious frenzy.
4. Primitive tribal instincts.

The series of outbreaks, due to above causes, may be regarded as the real precursors of the great revolt of 1857. They form the proper background of that movement, and if we want to view it in its true perspective, we must study its analogy with the earlier disturbances in regard to causes and incidents.

A somewhat detailed account is, therefore, given of these earlier instances of civil resistance as, really speaking, they are the series of links forming one single chain,—the isolated ebullitions which culminated in the great conflagration of 1857.

1. POLITICAL CAUSES

a. Personal Grievances

It is a significant fact that the two All-India confederacies to drive out the British from India, to which reference has been made above,[2] were both accompanied by an internal rebellion within the British territory itself. The first was the rebellion of Chait Singh, which is too well-known to need any detailed description. Chait Singh, Raja of Varanasi (Banaras), regularly paid his tributes to the British, and also met several exorbitant demands made by Hastings. The more he yielded, the more excessive grew the demands. Because the whole of this demand could not be met by him in time, Hastings imposed a fine of fifty lakhs of Rupees upon him, and personally went to Varanasi to extort the amount. Having arrived there, he put the Raja under arrest on August 16, 1781, and confined him in his own palace under a strong military guard. The Raja, however, effected his escape. The high handed action towards the Raja led to a rebellion of his subjects, and the situation grew so serious that Hastings had to save his life by a timely flight. Chait Singh's forces offered heroic resistance for a long time. It soon ceased to be a mere local rising ; the whole country rose and the disturbances spread to Avadh and Bihar. The British Resident at Avadh expressed the view that the rebellion of Chait Singh was but a part of a large and more extensive plan which was prematurely brought forward before all the parties to it were united and properly prepared for action. A large number of Zamindars rose against the British, and even the Begums of Avadh were suspected of helping Chait

Singh. According to Col. Hannay the whole country on the east side of the Gogra was in arms and rebellion. He reported that "the present insurrection is said and believed to be with an intention to expel the English"; he again wrote: "It is the general belief of every man in this part of the country that the conduct I have related is a concerted plan for the extirpation of the English".[3]

Next in point of time was the rebellion of Wazir Ali. After the death of his father Asafuddaulla, the Nawab of Avadh, he ascended the throne of his father. Although his accession was challenged by his uncle Sadat Ali on the ground of his spurious birth, his claim was admitted by the British Government. But his strong personality and spirit of independence made him an enemy of the British. About this time the Court of Directors instructed the Governor-General to increase the subsidiary force of Avadh. Sir John Shore undertook a journey to Avadh, but finding Wazir Ali not easily manageable, reversed the previous decision, removed Wazir Ali from the throne and offered it to Sadat Ali, who entered into a new agreement with the English accepting all their terms. Wazir Ali was permitted to live at Varanasi (Banaras) with a large retinue, and allowed a liberal pension. The British Government entertained at this time great apprehensions of an invasion of India by Zaman Shah, ruler of Kabul, and they suspected that Wazir Ali was secretly intriguing with him. It was therefore decided to remove him to Calcutta, and Mr. Cherry, the Resident at Varanasi, was instructed to carry out the decision. Wazir Ali naturally disliked the idea, and he had a grievance against Cherry for the role he played in his deposition. So, on January 14, 1799, Wazir Ali paid a state visit to Cherry with a retinue, and murdered him. The house of Mr. Davis, the Magistrate, was also attacked, but he successfully defended himself. This was followed by a general rising against the Europeans, some of whom were killed. On the approach of the British troops Wazir Ali fled, first to Nepal,

and then, after ravaging Gorakhpur, to Rajputana, where he was surrendered to the British by the Raja of Jaipur.

Wazir Ali's rebellion was neither local nor of personal character, and was connected with the all-India conspiracy about this time, referred to above.[4] A scrutiny of the papers, belonging to Wazir Ali, revealed that a treaty had been 'secretly concluded between Daulat Rao Sindhia and Wazir Ali, the objects of which were of the most hostile nature to the Company'. The same papers also refer to the possibility of a concert between Sindhia, Tipu Sultan and Wazir Ali. There are also references to emissaries promoting Wazir Ali's interests with Zaman Shah.

After Wazir Ali's insurrection at Varanasi he received considerable support both from Avadh and various parts of British territories. "A part of the troops of the Nawab of Avadh which were required to assist in reducing the disturber, in reality joined his standard. He found himself in a short time at the head of an army of several thousand men, descended with them into the plains of Gorakhpur, and threw the whole kingdom into trepidation and alarm".[5]

The brother of the Nawab of Dacca (East Pakistan) also sent two emissaries to Wazir Ali, one of whom was subsequently deputed by him to Zaman Shah of Kabul. The brother of the Nawab of Dacca wrote to Zaman Shah, "earnestly imploring him in the name of Islam to destroy the British power". The secret records of the Company refer to scores of important persons in Bengal and Bihar who were actively associated with Wazir Ali in a conspiracy to overthrow the British.[6]

Reference may also be made to the repeated rebellions of Surendra Sai, an unsuccessful claimant to the throne of Sambalpur.[6a]

b. Reaction against British conquest.[7]

Malabar passed into British hands by the treaties with Tipu Sultan in 1792. But, with a few exceptions, the Rajas

of Malabar openly defied the British, and were in a state of hostility for six years, keeping a considerable proportion of the Bombay army in constant hostile operations against them. Kerala Varma Raja of the Kottayam family, generally called the Pyche Raja, raised a formidable insurrection and was joined by the Raja of Kohote. A series of fights took place between their followers and the Company's troops, and on at least three occasions the latter suffered severe reverses. The situation became so grave that the British authorities were forced to come to terms with the Pyche Raja who received very favourable terms.

The British occupation of Assam valley was followed by a series of insurrections with the avowed object of driving the English out of the country.[8] In 1830, a Singpho Chief surprised the British outpost at Sadiya, and his followers, numbering about three thousand, and provided with fire-arms, spears and swords, entrenched themselves in a stockade. "The Sadiya insurrection of 1839 assumed a still more formidable proportion: Col. White, the political agent, lost his life and eight others were killed or wounded". Similarly, the Taji Raja, the chief of the Kapaschor Akas, killed in 1835 a number of British subjects, and stirred up commotion among the hill tribes against the imposition of British rule. The Nagas also revolted in 1849.

An aftermath of the conquest of Mysore was the rebellion of Dhundia Wagh, a Maratha adventurer.[9] He recruited a number of discharged soldiers of Mysore, and was joined by many chiefs and *killadars* who were adversely affected by the British conquest. He thus became a formidable power, and though many British detachments were sent against him, he managed to evade them. He corresponded with various disaffected chiefs of British territories, asking them to make a common cause against the British. He assumed the title of 'King of the two worlds' and appointed officers of the rank of Nawab in his territories. Ultimately he was defeated and killed in A.D, 1800 by Arthur Wellesley, the future Duke of

Wellington. Eminent British writers held the view that he might have been a second Hyder Ali, if he were not checked by the British in time.[10]

Bundelkhand passed into the hands of the British as a result of the Second Maratha War (1803-1805). But the new Government was defied from the very beginning by the numerous chiefs entrenched in their forts, nearly one hundred and fifty in number. The *killadars* of Ajaygarh and Kalanjar offered stubborn resistance to the British forces, Lakshman Dawa, the chieftain of Ajaygarh, when forced to surrender, requested the British authorities to blow him from the mouth of a gun. After he was taken captive to Calcutta. his mother, wife and children were killed by Lakshman's father-in-law, who later killed himself, preferring death to disgrace and dishonour.[11]

A military adventurer in Bundelkhand, named Gopal Singh, who was deprived of his estate by the British, scoured the country for four years. "The marauding attacks of Gopal and his levies, carried out intermittently, ultimately tired out the resources of his powerful antagonist, and, as Mill says, 'are worthy of record as an instance of success',[12] which can flow from personal activity, resolution and devoted adherence of a faithful band of followers imbued with political purposes."

Shaharanpur passed into the hands of the British in A.D. 1803. The Gujars rose in revolt in 1813 on account of the resumption of the enormous estate of Raja Ram Dayal after his death. But it was easily suppressed. In 1842, Bijai Singh, the *Talukdar* of Kunja, near Roorki, and a relative of the late Ram Dayal, broke out into open revolt and was joined by Kalwa, the notorious leader of bandits. The rebel leader assumed the title of Raja, and levied contributions on the surrounding districts.[13] After a fierce combat in which nearly two hundred insurgents were killed, the mud fort of Kunja was taken and the rebels were scattered. "It was revealed later that the rising was about to be supported by

numerous reinforcements coming from many districts—but the conspiracy collapsed."

The Poligars of South India, who had maintained their independence from time immemorial, offered obstinate resistance to the imposition of the British authority. Series of rebellions broke out in different parts of South India—Tinnevelly, Ceded Districts (Bellary, Anantpur, Cuddapah and Kurnool Districts) and North Arcot—all parts of the same struggle to overthrow the British supremacy. Glowing tributes have been paid even by the British writers to their heroic and patriotic struggle to defend their country and liberty for a long period.

Savantvadi, on the coast of N. Konkan, passed und.r British protection in 1819, but insurrections broke out in 1830, 1832 and 1836. On each of those occasions, the British further tightened their hold on the State, and ultimately they assumed charge of the Government. At the time of the rising in the neighbouring State of Kolhapur in 1844, there was a general revolt in course of which Anna Sahib, the heir apparent, joined the rebels, assumed royal style and began to collect revenue. The rebels even opened negotiations with the native officers of the British army. The revolt gradually spread even to the British districts of Varad and Pendur, but was suppressed by various military measures. In 1858, taking advantage of the Mutiny, the brother of the deposed ruler headed a rebellion which raged all along the forest frontier from Savantvadi to Canara. It was not finally crushed till 1859.

There were also risings in Bijapur district. In December, 1824, a Brahman, named Divakar Dikshit, gathered a band of followers and plundered Sindgi, about four miles east of Bijapur. "He established a government of his own by setting up a thana and making arrangement for the collection of revenue."

"A similar rising took place in 1840, when a Brahman, named Narsimh Dattatraya, led a band of 125 Arabs from

the Nizam's territory and captured the Badami fort. He took possession of the town and proclaimed himself 'Narsimh Chhatrapati', and hoisted the flag of Shahu. To sustain himself in power, he plundered the government treasury, and exercised royal power by giving lands on lease to cultivators".

Vizieram Rauze, the Raja of Vizianagram, held an extensive *Zamindari* in the Vizagapatam district, in the Andhra Pradesh. He maintained more than seven thousand troops of his own and could count on the military resources of other chiefs whom he regarded as his tributaries. The British authorities decided to disband his troops and to add the amount, thus saved, to the rent paid by the Raja. It was also decided to remove his control over his tributary chiefs. The Raja then collected a force, four thousand strong, and fought with the Company's troops in 1794. He was defeated and killed, but his young son Narayan Rauze continued the hostility. "Very soon the young Raja became the rallying point of all discontented elements. Thousands of armed men gathered round him, the leaders collected the *kists* from the ryots, organised the defences of the country, and carried out other measures to supplant the Company's rule." But ultimately he came to terms with the British authorities.

There were two other rebellions in the same region, under the leadership, respectively, of Birabhadra Rauze (1830-33) and Jagannath Rauze (1832-34). There was also a general rising in Palkonda (1831-2).

Kimedi was a large *Zamindari* estate in the Ganjam district. The arrest of the *Zamindar*, for non-payment of arrears of rent, provoked an outbreak in 1798. "The insurrection soon spread into a general revolt, and assumed an alarming aspect. Villages were burnt, grain carried away in broad daylight and the people were ordered not to pay any revenue to the Company under the pain of death". Although the outbreak was suppressed, recurring disturbances of a serious nature continued till A.D. 1834. Similarly many other *Zamindars* of Ganjam district rebelled under the leadership

of the *Zamindar* of Gumsur, Strikara Bhanja (1800-1801). His son Bhanja Dhananjaya raised a more formidable rebellion in 1835, and for some time reduced the British Government to a shadow.

On the death of Shivalinga Rudra, the *desai* of Kittur in the Belgaum District, the British authorities refused to accept his adopted son as the heir. This provoked a rebellion in A. D. 1824 for overthrowing the British rule, in course of which several British officers were killed. The insurgents, 5000 strong, shut themselves up in the fort of Kittur, and demanded that the independence of the State should be respected. But they were forced to surrender. Five years later, in 1829, there was again a rising, on behalf of the adopted son, for the restoration of the independence of Kittur.

The evils of annexation in the shape of disbanded soldiery were demonstrated by the rising of the Ramosis, who served in the inferior ranks of police in the Maratha administration. Due to a famine in 1825 there was considerable distress in Poona and the neighbouring regions and the Remosis rose in revolt and committed depredations for three years (1826-29). The general situation is thus described by Captain Duff in 1832:

"In the Peshwa's territories in the Deccan, the risk of internal disturbance became considerable. A vast body of unemployed soldiery were thrown upon the country, not only of those who had composed the Peshwa's army, both Maharattas and foreigners, but those of the disbanded armies of Holkar, Scindia and the Raja of Berrar. They were ready to join not merely in any feasible attempt to overthrow our power, but in any scheme which promised present plunder and anarchy".

Similar evils of annexation resulted in the rebellion of the Gadkaris at Kolhapur in 1844. "The garrison of every Maratha fort was composed of these military classes who received assignment of lands which they held on condition

of service. But the resumption of these lands took place on a very large scale during the settlement of the Satara district". 'Being in possession of several forts the Gadkaris easily enforced their proprietary right on lands of which they were very jealous'. "The social distemper of this semi-agricultural military class was further aggravated by the reports about the paucity of British troops which were sedulously propagated. They began their operations by shutting out gates of the forts of Samangad and Bhudargad in Kolhapur, and the attempt of the British forces to take the former by storm failed. Disaffection spread rapidly, a parallel Government was set up in supersession of the existing one, and all kinds of excesses were committed."

c. *Misrule in Protected States*

The intolerable misrule in the 'Protected States' provoked a few rebellions. The earliest was a formidable revolt in 1804, in the Travancore State, by the Nair battalions in the service of the Raja. The disaffection, originating from the reduction of allowances, soon took an anti-British turn and the rebels, 10,000 in number, aimed at the subversion of British power and influence in Travancore.

In 1808, Velu Tampi, the Dewan of Travancore, broke out into open rebellion.[14] At the head of an army, consisting of more than twenty thousand men, with eighteen guns, he advanced first towards Quilon, and then against Cochin, and fought several pitched battles. He wrote to the Zamorin of Calicut "expressing violent apprehension of the extension of Christian faith", and "exhorted him to rise against the British". He murdered a number of British soldiers who came to land from a vessel at Aleppi. Though after repeated defeats the Raja surrendered and accepted British terms, the Dewan, when hotly pursued, killed himself in the precincts of a temple where he had taken refuge. But his dead body was taken by the relentless pursuers and was exposed upon a gibbet.

A spirit of general hostility against the British rule was fomented among the Rajput chiefs of Kathiawar by Baji Rao II in 1815-18. So the British interference in the affairs of Cutch, by virtue of the treaty with the Gaekwar of Baroda, led to several conspiracies and risings to drive the English out of Kathiawar. The most formidable was the rebellion of Rao Bharmal II who raised Arab troops "with the avowed intention of expelling the British from his country." Although he was defeated, the struggle was continued by the chiefs of Wagar District.

Rumours of British defeat in the Burma campaign of 1824-26 encouraged some disaffected elements of the locality to rise against the British. The Jhareja Chiefs, sorely aggrieved for the forfeiture of their lands, made an attempt, in co-operation with the Amirs of Sindh, to restore Rao Bharmal to the throne and destroy the British power.

2. ECONOMIC CAUSES

In a large number of cases the disturbances were due to over-assessment of land, heavy exactions from cultivators, dispossession of old *Zamindar* families by process of auction-sale or resumption, and depriving a large class of petty landholders of their tenure based on prescriptive service which was no longer required.

A large number of *Zamindars* in Bengal showed a defiant spirit from the very beginning of British rule. Even when the British authority was firmly established in Bengal, several *Zamindars* were led to revolt against it. The Raja of Dhalbhum, determined not to admit a *Firinghee* into his country, barricaded all narrow passes, and offered a stiff resistance to the British forces. When the Raja was forced to flee, his nephew Jagannath Dhal was put in his place by the British (1767). But Jagannath proved equally refractory, and when Captain Morgan was sent against him, "he found the whole country up in arms against the British authority ; it was no longer the resistance of a local Zamindar ; all the landed

chiefs of the country seem to have rallied round Jagannath". The Chuars, a class of wild tribes, joined the fray, and committed many acts of violence in A.D. 1770. They completely surprised Lieut. Nunn's force, killed and wounded a considerable number, and cut down pickets of sepoys. Jagannath recruited these wild tribes and in 1773 carried out violent raids on such an extensive scale that the British authorities were compelled to undertake several military expeditions against him. Jagannath threatened wholesale destruction unless he was reinstated as the "Raja', and, after a long series of attacks and counter-attacks, the British Government was compelled to make peace by restoring his estate.

The exactions and oppressions of the notorious Debi Singh, whom Burke has immortalised in his speeches during the impeachment of Warren Hastings, led to a violent insurrection of the peasants at Rangpur in A.D. 1783.

In Bishnupur, revolt broke out for similar reasons in 1789. The oppressed masses made a common cause with the marauders who had already begun their depredations throughout the district. Although military forces were drawn out, "all traces of English rule, for the time being, faded away."

Reference has been made above to the rebellion of the Chuars, who inhabited the hills between Ghatsila and Barabhum, in 1770. A more formidable rising of these wild tribes took place in 1799. The whole country-side was devastated and even the town of Midnapore was threatened. The Collector drew "the immediate attention of the Government to the innumerable outrages which were daily committed with impunity, and 'without least intermission.' On 14th March, the Chuars burned down two villages, and on the next day, Government property amounting to 2,000 *arraks* of paddy was consigned to flames in the very large village of Shiromani which was totally sacked."

In 1800 the Chuars plundered several *maujas*. "Madhab Singh, the brother of the Raja of Barabhum, at the head of

his Chuar followers, became so formidable that Wellesley's Government had to adopt vast measures for his apprehension. Other leaders of the time were Raja Mohan Singh, Zamindar of Juriah, and Lachman Singh who hurled defiance from his mountain stronghold of Dulma." 'The Chuar insurrection of 1799 has been attributed to the resumption of paik jagir lands in the Zamindari of the Rani of Karnagarh.'

"In Sylhet also resistance was offered to collecting officers, and in 1787, a disaffected chief, Radharam, broke out into open rebellion. He laid several villages under contribution, and murdered a number of the inhabitants."

The enhancement of land assessment led to a serious revolt in Malabar in 1802. 'Led by Edachenna Kungan, the rebels captured the Panamaram fort in the Wynad District on October 11, 1802, and massacred its garrison. In 1803 the whole province was in ferment; rebellion had extended in all directions, and armed bands openly took the field against government troops.'

"The Poligars of Panjalankurichi in the Tinnevelly District held out stubbornly against British forces, and when Col. Fullarton fell upon them on 12 August, 1783, a bloody battle ensued; but the fort was finally stormed, and an enormous quantity of guns and ammunition were seized. Fullarton then turned against the Poligars of Sivagiri and captured the post after a desperate contest." The disturbances in Malabar continued till 1812.

A dangerous outbreak took place at Bareilly in 1816. To the usual agrarian grievances was added the imposition of a tax for maintaining municipal police, which was realised with undue severity. Mufti Muhammad Aiwaz, a grand old man, held in veneration throughout Rohilkhand, took up the cause of the oppressed people. The immediate cause of the rising was the wound inflicted on a woman by the police, while distraining for the tax. In the scuffle which ensued, several rioters were killed and the Mufti himself received a slight injury. "The injury to the person of the Mufti was more than

the Muhammadans could bear—'sacrilege was added to exaction.' Meanwhile, in his sanctuary at Shahdara, the Mufti unfurled the green flag of Islam which evoked a tremendous enthusiasm among the muslim masses. The leaven of religious discontent infected the people to such an extent that they became furious for actions in the defence of their insulted religion; the question of tax fell in the background. The Mufti must have forwarded communications to the surrounding districts, and in the course of two days vast number of armed muslims, particularly from the town of Pilibhit where it produced the greatest tension, and also from Shahjahanpur and Rampur, flocked to the standard for the defence of the faith and the Mufti. They were armed with swords and matchlocks and the number was variously estimated at five thousand or fifteen thousand." "On 21 April, 1816, the insurgents murdered the son of Leycester and even outflanked the sepoys in an open engagement. The forces of the magistrate under Captain Boscawen and Lieut. Lucas being inadequate, the 2nd battalion of the 13th N. I. under Captain Cunningham and Major Richards were hurried into Bareilly." After initial set-backs the British forces defeated the rebels. More than three hundred of them were killed, and a greater number wounded and taken prisoners. On the British side twenty-one were killed and sixty-two wounded.

The landholders in the district of Aligarh were also constant sources of troubles. "The attitude of the Zamindars, who converted their places of residence into fortresses of formidable strength, made the position worse. In 1814 it was found necessary to employ regular troops in reducing the landholders to order, who in some cases were found to harbour gangs of marauders like Badhiks. The country was infested by these gangs of Badhiks and Mewatis who had their headquarters, as a rule, in Mursan and Hathras estates."

"Of these petty chieftains, the most formidable was Dayaram, a Talukdar of a number of villages in the district of Aligarh. His fort had walls of great height and thickness

and was defended by a deep ditch and by guns mounted at the top. The garrison was about eight thousand strong, of which three thousand and five hundred were horse."

"A whole division under the command of Major-General Marshall was sent against him. It was an act of pure spoliation, as Dayaram was not involved in any overt act of hostility: naturally he resisted and fought stubbornly against his powerful enemy for a long period from 12 February to March 2, 1817."

"Dayaram's fort was considered to be the strongest in India, a 'second Bharatpur', its defences elaborately perfected by the latest innovation. The military stations of Cawnpur, Muttra and Meerut furnished a large train of artillery each. On 12 February, 1817, the town was closely invested and after some useless negotiations, the siege commenced on the seventeenth of that month. After a week's operations, the fortified town encircling the fort was breached, and approaches having been secured, batteries were erected to open fire on the fort. Dayaram's followers fought stubbornly, but could not do much against the besieging army which began operations on 1 March. It was the 'most powerful assemblage of artillery hitherto witnessed in India': forty-two mortars and three heavy batteries went into action and continued cannonading throughout the whole day."

In A. D. 1817 the Paiks of Orissa also rose in revolt. They formed a kind of local militia, wild and ferocious, yet blindly devoted to their chiefs. The exceedingly high assessment and consequent eviction of *Zamindars* created great resentment, which particularly manifested itself in the district of Khŭrda whose Raja, held in great respect by the people, was a great sufferer. He was charged with anti-British conspiracy in 1804, and his estate was confiscated. Khurda was created a Khas Mahal with the result that the lands held by the Paiks for military or police service were resumed. The Paiks broke into revolt under the leadership of Jagabandhu Bidyadhar Mahapatra, formerly the Com-

mander of the forces of the Raja of Khurda, who also was dispossessed of his ancestral estate.

"The spark was lighted by the arrival of a body of Khonds, 400 strong, from Gumsur into the Khurda territory in March, 1817. This led to the fusion of all the disaffected elements. The Paiks rose as one man under their leader Jagabandhu, and began by committing depredations on the police station and government buildings at Banpur where they killed upwards of 100 men and carried away rupees 15,000 of treasure. The success of the insurgents had set the whole country in arms against the British Government. The rebels then proceeded to Khurda and the number swelled. All the civil buildings of that town were burnt to the ground, the treasury was sacked. The situation became so frightful that the government officers sought safety in flight; for the time being all traces of British rule were wiped away."

There was also an outbreak at Puri, and the Company's forces beat a hasty retreat to Cuttack leaving Puri to its fate. A new detachment had to be sent to subdue rebellion there.

The cultivators of Savda and Chopda in Khandesh revolted in 1852. "The Government was practically boycotted by the people; the people of Erandol refused to lend their carts for public and military service, mamlatdar's messengers were intercepted, and a Subadar-Major was kept confined at Erandol." "Though Erandol was recovered, Savda and Faizpur remained strong centres of disaffection. There the rebels had set up a government of their own in supersession of the existing one. A committee called panchayat conducted the local administration, collected the revenues and punished the offenders."

Several landowners of Sagar District, Bundelkhand, broke out into rebellion in 1842. There was a violent mass agitation in Surat, bordering on insurrection, in 1844, on account of the raising of duty on Salt.

3. RELIGIOUS FRENZY

The Sanyasi rebellion[15] was one of the most formidable that the British had to face almost at the very beginning of their rule in Bengal. The movement was initiated by the anti-British activities of two different groups—Hindu Sanyasis and Muslim Fakirs—but they gained momentum from the support they received from the starving peasantry, dispossessed *Zamindars* and the disbanded soldiers. It is difficult to ascertain the motives which impelled the two religious groups to make almost annual incursions into Bengal from 1763 onwards. After the great famine of 1770 their activities were increased, and the economic distress drove the people in large numbers to join the Sanyasis and defy the newly established British administration. By the end of 1772 there was a great "upsurge of the Sanyasis in the wild belt of country from Rangpur to Dacca", and they " threatened to sweep away the English power completely". Their fighting qualities were not negligible. In 1772 they defeated a company of sepoys sent against them and killed its commander, Captain Thomas. Encouraged by this success, different bands of Sanyasis, each comprising five to seven thousand under a distinguished leader, overran Bogra and Mymensingh districts. They levied contributions from the *Zamindars* and looted the houses of those who refused to pay. In 1773 the British Government sent Captain Edwards against them. He attempted to overtake a band of 300 Sanyasis, and suffered a disastrous defeat in which he and his detachment were all cut off, excepting 12 sepoys. Further encounters between the Sanyasis and the British forces took place all over Western Bengal and Bihar, but the Sanyasis could not be checked. The Sanyasis, however, gradually ceased to carry on their operations in Bengal and Bihar and probably joined the Marathas against the English.[16]

Next in point of time is the Faraidi movement[17] in Bengal. Shariatulla founded the Faraidi sect for religious reforms and

began to preach his doctrine in 1804. But he gradually turned it to political ends and declared the country under British occupation to be *Dar-ul-harb* where a true Muslim should not live. His son Dudhu Mian was more politically minded and improved the organization by dividing Eastern Bengal into circles and appointing a deputy or *khalifa* over each to collect contributions. He sought to unite the cultivators who suffered from the exactions and oppression of the *Zamindars*, but there was a general feeling that the real object of the Faraidis was the expulsion of the British and the restoration of the Muslim Power. He was a terror to the *Zamindars* and indigo-planters, and there were many acts of lawlessness and a severe riot in 1838 which necessitated the despatch of sepoys from Dacca.

The Faraidi movement in Bengal was merely a precursor of the more widely spread Wahabi movement which was initiated by Saiyid Ahmad of Rae Bareilly in U. P. About 1820 or 1821 he began to preach doctrines of religious reform in Islam similar to those held by the sect of Wahabis in Arabia. He collected a large band of followers around him and introduced a regular system of organization. Gradually, the movement took a political turn. A number of pamphlets were written urging a crusade against the British, and military training was given to the members. The headquarters were fixed at Sittana in N. W. F. P. In 1827 Saiyid Ahmad declared war against the Sikhs on the ground that they desecrated holy places, but was killed in a pitched battle four years later. The hostility was turned against the British when they succeeded the Sikhs as ruler of the Punjab. Henceforth the Wahabis carried on a relentless campaign against the British from their remote seat at Sittana. But the sinews of war, both in men and money, were regularly supplied from all over India. For this purpose the Wahabis developed a wonderful organization, the like of which was not known in India. A circular was addressed to all the districts of Bengal and Bihar urging the Muslims to proceed

to Mulka-Sittana in order to carry on a *Jihad* against the British. The Wahabis also enlisted the sympathy of the frontier tribes and their chiefs, and a state of warfare prevailed in the N. W. F. P. from 1850. During next seven years the British "were forced to send out sixteen distinct expeditions aggregating 33,000 regular troops".

It is not a little curious that this violently anti-British militant organisation should have practically kept aloof from the great revolutionary movement of 1857. Some Wahabis were suspected to have carried on secret intrigues with the mutineers at Patna, and perhaps some individuals really sympathised with the movement of 1857. But the Wahabis, as a body, kept aloof from it. It was obvious that the strong military organisation of the Wahabis at Sittana could have rendered great service to the cause of Mutiny by attacking the British in the north-west, as that would have considerably hampered, if not altogether stopped, the constant flow of men and money from the Panjab to Delhi. The Wahabis actually carried on severe and sustained military operations in this quarter within a few years after the Mutiny, but they kept quiet during the most eventful period of 1857-8. The only satisfactory explanation seems to be that the Wahabis favoured a purely Islamic movement and did not like to co-operate with the Hindus. This view is supported by the conduct of a number of individual Wahabis who joined the mutineers at Delhi. They "printed and published a proclamation, inviting all Mahomedans to arm and fight for their religion. A futwa was also published, declaring that it was the duty of all Mahomedans to make religious war, and that otherwise their families and children would be destroyed and ruined."[18]

The Wahabi sect created disturbances in Bengal under Titu Mir who committed violent outrages on the life, faith, and property of the Hindus. He proclaimed the extinction of the British Government and claimed "the sovereign power as the hereditary right of the Muslims which had been unjustly

usurped by the Europeans." The Wahabis established their influence in three districts in Bengal and routed a contingent of Calcutta militia. Later, a well-equipped military force was sent against them. Titu fought a pitched battle and was killed in 1831.

Another religious sect, the Pagla Panthis of Mymensingh in East Pakistan, led an insurrection against the Government in 1825 under a man called Tipu. He declared a no-rent campaign to any demand over a minimum rent and even assumed royal powers.

In January, 1810, a Muslim named Abdul Rahaman proclaimed himself the Imam Mehdi in Surat, and seized the fort of Nandvi from its Hindu chief. He wrote to the British chief at Surat asking him to embrace Islam and to pay a ransom. Meanwhile his followers fell upon the Hindus with cries of *din*, and assailed them in many ways.

In 1799, Aga Muhammad Reza, an Iranian Muslim adventurer, entered Cachar from Sylhet and made himself master of that country. He overpowered the local Raja with the help of the Naga Kukis whom he won over to his side. To crown all, he assumed the character of a prophet, and "gave out that he was the twelfth Imam, destined to deliver India from the yoke of the British merchants"[19] To vindicate his power, he sent 1,200 of his followers to attack the Company's thana at Bondassye but they were repulsed.

4. PRIMITIVE TRIBAL INSTINCTS

The Kol rising of 1831-2 illustrates the determined hostility of primitive tribes against all attempts to destroy the independence which they had enjoyed from time immemorial. The Hos of Singhbhum, a Kolarian tribe, claimed that their chiefs had exercised independent powers for fifty-two generations. "The raja of Singhbhum, or the raja of Porahat as he was called, resisted all attempts of the British to penetrate into his country ; his Hos subjects jealously guarded the

The Collector was unable to put them down. "At the end of 1788, a Khasi freebooter, named Ganga Singh, plundered the bazar and thana at Ishamaṭi, and in June, 1789, made bold attack on Panduah which was garrisoned by a force of sepoys, and inflicted many casualties on the rank and file of the army." In 1795, and again in 1825, about the time of the Burmese War, they committed depredations, and after the British occupation of the Assam Valley the Khasis made repeated incursions. Four years later, "a conspiracy was formed to exterminate the intruders. On April 4, 1829, Lieut. Bedingfield was enticed to a conference and murdered at Nungklow, while the other officer, Lieut. Burlton, and Mr. Bowman made desperate attempts to save themselves, but were overpowered by the Khasis along with their followers, fifty or sixty in number, and were slaughtered." This led to a long and harassing warfare. "These protracted hostilities turned into a general insurrection in which most of the hill chieftains secretly abetted the 'Nungklow raja and supplied him with the means of resistance.' It was more or less a confederacy of the Khasi chiefs resisting British occupation of the country."

The Khonds of Orissa broke out into open revolt in 1846, when measures were taken to suppress the customary human sacrifice and female infanticide which prevailed among them. "The rising became general and the warfare lingered for three years. Villages were burnt, strong places occupied, and jungles scoured by troops; but the Khonds, undaunted by defeat, held out in the depths of their highland lairs till 1848, when General Dyce cleared the country of the rebels."

The Bhils in the Khandesh and neighbouring hilly regions rose into revolt in 1818 and 1819, probably at the instigation of Trimbakji, the rebel *Diwan* of Peshwa Baji Rao II. There were many outbreaks in 1820-25, 1831 and 1846.

The Mers in Rajputana resisted for long all attempts of the British to bring them under control. A general insurrection broke out in 1820.

The Jats living in the district of Hariana, immediately to the west of Delhi, came under the British supremacy as a result of the Second Maratha War. But they put up an obstinate resistance, and there was a revolt at Biwani in 1809. The reported failure of the British in the First Burmese War led to a more formidable rebellion in 1824. The insurgents, consisting of the Jats, Mewatis, and Bhattis, plundered Government property and proclaimed that the British authority was at an end.

The Kolis were predatory tribes scattered in a large area from the borders of Cutch to the Western Ghats. They broke out into rebellion in 1824 and committed various excesses. In 1839 their insurrection took a more serious turn. Early in that year "bands of Kolis plundered a large number of villages in the ghats. All the turbulent elements of hills joined them. This time, they were led by three Brahmans,—Bhau Khare, Chimanji Jadhav, and Nana Darbare, who seem to have harboured some political motives. The rising of the year 1839 was not merely the usual explosion of the hill tribes: the reduction in the Poona garrison, lately made, led them to believe in the depletion of the British troops in that district; and consequently they felt bold enough to work for the restoration of the Peshwa, and the insurgents even assumed the charge of the government in his name." The Kolis again revolted in 1844 and were not finally suppressed till 1848.

The Santals, a primitive but very industrious people, were forced to migrate from their ancestral lands on account of the excessive demands of the *Zamindars* after the Permanent Settlement, and occupied the plains skirting the Rajmahal Hills, after clearing the forests with great industry and labour. But the oppressions of the *Mahajans* and traders from Bengal and Upper India, who lent them money at excessive interest and illegally recovered ten times their unjust dues, exactions of the police and revenue officials, dispossession of lands by *Zamindars*, and the insults and

indignities they suffered from the Englishmen goaded them into rebellion[20]. The dishonour to their women by the 'Sahiblok' specially irritated them.

The Santal rebellion of 1855-6 was marked by some of the worst features of elemental tribal passions and open denunciation of British rule. But it was primarily, perhaps mainly, due to economic causes, and there was no anti-British feeling at the beginning of the outbreak. The main grievances of the Santals were against the "civilised people" from Bengal and Upper India who swarmed their country and took advantage of their simplicity and ignorance to exploit them in a ruthless manner. They turned against the Government when they found that instead of remedying their grievances, the officers were more anxious to protect their oppressors from their wrathful vengeance. The Santals were exasperated "when those among them who had made night-attacks on the houses of some of the *mahajans* were tried and punished, while their oppressors were not even rebuked[21]". Under the leadership of two brothers, Sidhu and Kanhu, who are said to have divine revelation, ten thousand Santals met in June 1855, and declared their intention 'to take possession of the country and set up a Government of their own'. Sporadic depredations commenced immediately, but the movement assumed a formidable aspect by the middle of July, 1855. They assembled in different parts in parties of 10,000 each, cut off the postal and railway communications between Bhagalpur and Rajmahal, and were in complete control of this area. The Santals proclaimed the end of the Company's rule and the commencement of the regime of their Subah. "Armed chiefly with axes and poisoned arrows, large bodies of these half-reclaimed savages carried fire and sword into scores of happy villages, attacked every outlying European Bungalow, murdered with equal readiness English planters and railway-servants, native police-officers, tradesmen, peasants, their wives and children, and even swarmed up to the larger

European stations in the districts of Birbhum, Rajmahal and Bhagalpur[12]". They are even accused of "roasting Bengalis and ripping up their women".[2]

The authorities were taken utterly by surprise, and the panic-stricken natives fled by thousands. Even when troops were rushed they could do little more than hold a few isolated posts. The Santals fled before the musketry but found safe shelter in the thick jungles from which they could carry depredation. Some sepoy battalions fell back before them out of fear. A British force under Major Burrough was defeated, and the situation assumed "a very alarming aspect". The disturbed districts were handed over to the military and a regular campaign had to be conducted to suppress the rebellion. Even in August, the number of insurgents exceeded 30,000 men in arms. They showed no signs of submission and were openly at war with the British till February, 1856, when their leaders were arrested. Most inhuman barbarities were practised on the Santals after they were defeated.

FOOTNOTE

1. For a detailed account cf. *SB*.-I, the District Gazetteers and *HCIP*, Vol. IX, Chapter XIV.

2. See p. 4,

3. For Chait Singh, cf. Mill, IV. 380; Forrest—*Selections from State Papers*, III. 1003-1006. According to the District Gazetteer, "the whole country rose and the disturbances extended to Oudh and Bihar."

4. P. 4.

5. Mill, VI. 135-6.

6. For Wazir Ali's deposition and insurrection cf. Mill, VI. 126, 134-6; *SB*-I, 74 ff. Purnendu Basu—*Oudh and the East India Company* (1943). *Modern Review*, September, 1933, p. 206; *Bengal Past and Present*, Vol. 53, pp. 31-4. Foreign Department, Secret and Separate Proceedings, 1799, February 18, 25.

6a. Sambalpur *District Gazetteer*, pp. 25 ff.

7. The facts stated in this and the remaining sections of this chapter, as well as the passages quoted, unless otherwise stated, are taken from

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SB-I. Reference to pages may be easily found from the Index of that book.

8. Cf. R. M. Lahiri, *Annexation of Assam* (Calcutta, 1954); *HCIP*, IX. 140-41, 451-54.

9. Thornton, *History of British Empire in India* (1843), III. 93 ff.

10. Ibid. 115.

11. Mill, VII. 12 ff., 124 ff.

12. Ibid. 127-32.

13. Ibid. IX-X.

14. Thornton, *op. cit.*, IV. 118 ff. ; Mill, VII. 175 ff.

15. For a detailed account of the Sanyasi rebellion, cf the following:

   1. J. M. Ghosh, *Sanyasi and Fakir Raiders in Bengal* (Calcutta, 1930).
   2. Long, *Selections from Unpublished Records of the Government.*
   3. Hunter—*Annals of Rural Bengal.*
   4. Foreign Department. Secret Proceedings, 1773.
   5. Gleig—*Memoirs of Warren Hastings.*
   6. *PIHRC*, XXXI. 148.

16. Broughton—*Letters from Maratha Camp.* p. 129.

17. For Faraidi and Wahabi Movements, cf. *HCIP*, IX, Chapter XXIX, Section 1. *PIHRC*, XXXI. 174.

The Wahabi Movement led to various conspiracies in India, the most notable being that of Mubarizuddaulla, a brother of the Nizam of Hyderabad, in 1839.

18. *TB*. 271.

19. A. C. Banerjee, *The Eastern Frontier of British India*, p. 199.

20. The latest books giving full and authentic details of Santal rebellion are *Santal Insurrection of 1855-7*, by K. Datta, and *HCIP*, IX, 456 ff.

21. Datta, *op. cit.* 10. Hunter, *The Annals of Rural Bengal*, 254.

22. L. J. Trotter, *The History of the British Empire in India* I. 369.

23. Ibid.

BOOK II

THE MUTINY AND THE REVOLT

CHAPTER I

THE OUTBREAK OF THE MUTINY

1. THE BEGINNINGS OF THE MUTINOUS SPIRIT

Early in January, 1857, a Brahman sepoy, belonging to one of the British regiments stationed at Dumdum, about five miles to the north of Calcutta, was walking leisurely to his '*chowka*' to prepare his food, with his *lotā* (water-pot, usually made of brass or bell-metal) full of water, in his hand. He was met on the way by a low-caste *Khālāsi*, attached to the magazine at Dumdum, who asked him to let him drink from his *lotā*. The sepoy, a high-caste Brahman, refused, saying, "I have scoured my *lotā* ; you will defile it by your touch." The *Khālāsi* rejoined, probably with some amount of pungency and not without some inner delight: "You think much of your caste, but wait a little, the Sahib-log (Englishmen) will make you bite cartridges soaked in cow and pork fat, and then where will your caste be?"[1] The explanation was not long in coming. Towards the end of the year 1856, the military authorities in India proposed to replace the old-fashioned musket by the Enfield Rifle which required a particular species of cartridge greased with lard made from the fat either of the hog or of the ox.[2] These cartridges were being manufactured at Dumdum and therefore the *Khālāsi* was expected to know the details. To the consternation of the Brahman sepoy it was explained by the *Khālāsi* that the end of these cartridges had to be bitten off with teeth. Subsequent investigations have proved beyond doubt that the statement of the *Khālāsi* was true in every detail.[3]

The Brahman sepoy, terribly upset, lost no time in carrying the news to his comrades. The effect of the rumour

can be easily understood by anyone who knows anything about the religious ideas of the classes of people from whom the sepoys were recruited. To touch by the teeth the fat of the cow and the pig would violate the religious injunctions of both the Hindus and the Muslims. Further, the Hindu sepoys very rightly apprehended that by so doing they would not only pollute themselves beyond redemption, but would also be ostracised by their caste people. Those who know anything of the Hindu society in those days would readily agree that this fear was not only not unfounded, but would weigh even more heavily with many of them.

The rumour about the greased cartridges produced consternation among the sepoys at the cantonment at Barrackpur, 15 miles from Calcutta, and they, along with their native commissioned officers, placed the matter before the authorities. Hearsey, the General commanding at Barrackpur, was so much impressed with the gravity of the situation, that he recommended that the sepoys might be allowed at the depot to grease their own cartridges. The Government accepted this suggestion on January 27, and "transmitted orders by telegraph to the Adjutant-General to issue only cartridges free frm grease, and to permit the sipahis to do the greasing themselves."[4] The Adjutant-General "wired back that the concessions of the Government would rouse the very suspicion they were intended to allay; that for years past the sipahis had been using greased cartridges, the grease being mutton fat and wax; and that he begged that the system might be continued."[5] The Government "replied that the greased cartridges might be issued, provided the materials were only those mentioned by the Adjutant-General."[6]

It was also suggested by responsible Englishmen, outside the army, that a representative body of the sepoys might be taken to the manufacturing depots so that they might see with their own eyes the whole process of preparing the cartridges.[7] But this eminently reasonable suggestion was not

acted upon. The Government did not evidently realise the depth of the feeling that excited the sepoys ; in any case they did nothing that might allay the suspicion of the sepoys, who not only firmly believed that the fat of the cow and the pig was still being used, but, what was still worse, that this was being deliberately done to convert them into Christianity. Such suspicions, once roused, are very hard to remove, and they have a tendency to grow from more to more, as we shall see later.

It was not long before the effect of the rumour about the greased cartridges upon the minds of the sepoys could be clearly seen. Acts of incendiarism were reported from Barrackpur, as well as from Ranigunge where a wing of the Barrackpur regiment was stationed.[8] It was believed at the time, and since proved on reasonable evidence, that these were committed by the sepoys, who "vented their rage by setting fire to public buildings and their officers' Bungalows." The feeling ran very high among the sepoys of the 34th N. I.[9] stationed at Barrackpur. A Jamadar of this regiment reported to his Colonel on February 6, 1857, that the sepoys were secretly assembled on the preceding night and decided to break out into open rebellion. Such reports should not, of course, be taken as authentic account of what actually happened, but they undoubtedly indicate the depth of discontentment among the sepoys of the 34th N. I.

On February 18 and 25, two detachments of the 34th N. I. arrived in course of their routine duty at Berhampur, about 120 miles from Calcutta, where 19th N. I. was located. There can be hardly any doubt that men of the 34th communicated their feelings about the cartridge to those of the 19th. In any case, on the 26th evening the latter refused to receive their percussion caps for the parade on the following morning on the ground that they were suspicious of the cartridges. As soon as this news reached Mitchell, the commanding Officer, he 'hastened in hot passion to the sepoy lines' and rebuked them severely. This confirmed the suspicions of the

sepoys, and at about midnight the regiment rose as one man, the sepoys loading their muskets and shouting violently. There were, at that time, in Berhampur, a detachment of native cavalry and a battery of native artillery. Presuming that these were not in league with the mutinous sepoys, Mitchell ordered them to the lines and himself proceeded there. The sepoys were "excited but not violent." Mitchell, then, for the second time, began to threaten the sepoys fiercely. "Seeing what a dreadful effect his words were producing, the native officers pressed forward, and implored him to calm the men's fears by withdrawing the force which had been brought to overawe them". After a great deal of hesitation and parley he accepted the advice, and withdrew. Next morning the excitement among the sepoys subsided. They fell in for parade and obeyed the orders as before[10].

The Government instituted a Court of Inquiry and, on their findings, "determined to treat it as a local incident, which had attained undue proportions owing to the violent measures taken by Col. Mitchell. The Governor-General-in-Council, therefore, resolved to disband the 19th."[11]

In the meantime things were moving fast at Barrackpur. Even though the sepoys were permitted to use their own grease, as stated before, they objected to the shining cartridge paper which, they feared, contained grease. As a further concession, the sepoys were allowed "to pinch off the ends of their cartridges instead of biting them". But the sepoys, not very unreasonably, replied that long habit "would make them use their teeth instead of their fingers."[12] No effect was produced on their minds by the eloquent addresses of Hearsey, though he assured them that there was no design against their caste or religion. He further added that 'they need fear no punishment which was reserved for those who deserved it, the mutinous 19th N. I.'[13]

The effect of this obeservation was just the opposite of what was intended. The open defiance of authority by the 19th N. I. for the sake of their religion, even at the risk of

sacrificing their all, put the other sepoys to a sense of shame and self-reproach, and served as an inspiration. Besides, the sepoys of the 34th N. I. very rightly felt that they were mainly responsible for the terrible disgrace which awaited the 19th N. I. To be reminded of the penalty of the 19th was bad enough, but it was hundred times worse when it was coupled with the suggestion that they should avoid a similar fate by abject and cowardly submission in a matter affecting their caste and religion. The speech of Hearsey, far from creating a soothing effect, produced a state of feverish excitement among the sepoys of the 34th N. I.

Matters came to a head on March 29, when Mangal Pandey, a sepoy of the 34th N. I., openly mutinied, single-handed. It was a strange phenomenon, and being the first act of open armed rebellion on the part of a sepoy, deserves a more particular notice.

When, on receiving the information, the adjutant of the 34th, Lt. Baugh, arrived at the lines, he "saw a single sepoy, named Mangal Pandey, marching up and down in front of the quarter-guard, calling upon his comrades to join him, and strike a blow for their religion, and threatening to shoot the first European whom he saw." This was no mere idle threat, for as soon as he saw Baugh he fired at him. Baugh was unhurt but his horse fell. Then Baugh also fired, but missed. What followed is thus described by a high authority:

"Then began a desperate hand-to-hand encounter. The Mutineer drew his tulwar, and slashed the adjutant across his left hand and neck. The sergeant-major of the regiment rushed to support his officer; but the sepoy was a match for them both. Hard by stood the guard of twenty sepoys looking on unconcerned; and, when the sergeant-major shouted to their jemadar for aid, he made no attempt to bring them forward, and even suffered them to strike their helpless officers with the butt-ends of their muskets. One man only, a Mahomedan named Sheikh *Pultoo*, came to help the struggling Europeans, and held the mutineer while they escaped.

Meanwhile, other European Officers were hurrying to the spot. One of them, Colonel Wheler of the 34th, ordered the guard to seize the mutineer: but no one obeyed him. Then Grant, the brigadier of the station, interposed his superior authority: but still the guard paid no heed. The solitary but successful mutineer was still taunting his comrades for allowing him to fight their battles unaided; the British Officers, their authority despised, were still looking helplessly on; when their chief with his two sons rode up at a gallop to the ground. Indignantly he asked his officers why they had not arrested the mutineer. They answered that the guard would not obey orders. "Not obey orders," said Hearsey, significantly pointing to his revolver, "listen to me; the first man who refuses to march when I give the word is a dead man. Quick, march!" Sullenly the guard submitted, and followed their master to arrest Mungul Pandy; but he too saw that the day was lost, and in despair turned his musket against himself. He fell wounded; but he did not save himself from a felon's death."[14]

Mangal Pandey fully deserves the honour of the first martyr which posterity has given to him. But it is difficult to account for the attitude displayed by his comrades. They refused to join him openly, and yet made themselves guilty of acts of commission and omission which deserved very stern punishment. But, strangely enough, they were very lightly punished. Mangal Pandey and the Jamadar were tried and executed, and the 34th N. I., like the 19th, were disbanded. The dishonoured sepoys of these two regiments returned in a sullen mood to their distant homes in Avadh, there to spread the story of the cartridges, greased with the fat of the cow and the pig, which was sure to excite the masses who not unnaturally looked upon these sepoys as martyrs in the cause of their religion.

When the disbanded sepoys accepted their punishment without any outward act of defiance, the Government must have heaved a sigh of relief and congratulated themselves on

saving so easily what appeared to many to be a perilous situation. But it was apparent ere long that the contagion was far more widely spread than was at first imagined. Unerring evidence was daily accumulating to show that the discontent and mutinous spirit had affected the sepoys of the whole Bengal Army located in remote parts of India. The incidents of Barrackpur were repeated at Amballa, at the other end of the country, towards the end of March. Here, again, we find the same piteous appeal of the sepoys to save their caste and religion by withdrawing the greased cartridges, the sympathy of the local Officers, but opposition of the Central Government, followed by acts of incendiarism. Towards the end of April, a Sikh gave evidence "that the men had sworn to burn down every bungalow in the station in revenge for the order to use the cartridges."[15]

The same scene was enacted at Lakhnau shortly after. But here the situation grew more serious than mere incendiarism. On 2 May, the 7th Oudh Regiment refused to bite the cartridges, saying that they must do as the rest of the army did. On May 3, it was reported that the sepoys had threatened to murder their officers. Henry Lawrence, the Chief Commissioner of Avadh, acted promptly and other Indian regiments co operated with him. Most of the mutineers fled at his approach, and the rest laid down their arms when ordered to do so. The regiment was later disbanded.

It has been remarked by a historian of the Mutiny that within three months after the *Khālāsi* had told the Brahman sepoy the story of the greased cartridges, "it had become an article of faith with nine-tenths of the sepoys of Northern India."[16] In the meantime another rumour was added. It was alleged "that the officers were mixing dust ground from the bones of cows with the flour for their men's use, and throwing it into the wells." It had such a firm hold on the men at Kanpur, where the price of flour soared very high, that they refused to touch a cheap supply sent specially from Mirat because they feared that it had been adulterated.[17]

About the same time appeared the mysterious *chapati* (unleavened bread made of flour which formed the staple diet of men of Upper India). It was widely spread over a large area, and though its meaning and significance were as much a mystery then as it is today, designing persons represented it to be an act of the Government for the overthrow of the religion of the people. Other meanings attributed to it will be discussed later.

Thus the situation at the beginning of May, 1857, was disquieting in the extreme, but was not, generally speaking, regarded as very serious. Nor was there any reason to do so. It is easy to be wise after the event, and wiseacres at a later period saw in the facts and phenomena, described above, a deep-rooted political conspiracy hatched by big men who deluded the sepoys with concocted stories about greased cartridges, so that they might be mere tools in their hands in the great struggle which they were going to launch against the British power in India. How far this can be regarded even as a plausible hypothesis, will be discussed later. It will suffice here to state that the plain and unvarnished story told above practically sums up all that is definitely known, or has been established on good authority. Anything beyond it, howsoever sought to be justified by later events, is either pure imagination, or result of specious reasoning, which should not find any place in sober history. The conduct of the two disbanded regiments, 19th and 34th N. I., the attitude of the comrades of Mangal Pandey, and the behaviour of the sepoys at Lakhnau are certainly calculated to preclude the idea of conspiracy, even among the sepoys themselves, not to speak of outside agencies.

2. MIRAT (Meerut)

Mirat was a military cantonment situated about 40 miles to the north of Delhi. At this important military station there were two regiments of Native Infantry and one of Native Cavalry. As against these, the British troops consisted of a

dragoon regiment, a battalion of Rifles, and bodies of horse and foot artillery, 'forming altogether the strongest European force at any post in the North-Western Provinces."[18] Here, as elsewhere, the sepoys were excited by the rumours of greased cartridges and of bone-dust mixed with flour, and the usual acts of incendiarism followed. The matter came to a head when, on April 24, 1857,[19] eighty-five troopers out of ninety, of the Third Cavalry, refused to touch the cartridges oñ the parade ground. They were tried by a court martial and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment with hard labour, but the Commander of the Division reduced the sentence to half in the case of eleven of the younger offenders.

The sepoys were guilty of an offence which was solely due to their religious scruples. As we shall see later, even the British Commander-in-Chief expressed the opinion that there was nothing to be surprised at the objection of the sepoys to use the greased cartridge.[20] Yet, for this offence, the sepoys were sentenced to penal servitude and treated as felons. But if the sentence was a heavy one, it was executed in a way that outraged every sense of decency. On may 9, the condemned men were led to the parade ground which was open to the public and attended by all the troops of the station, both native and European. The reader may get a fair idea of the scene from the following graphic account given by Kaye, the great historian of the Mutiny.

"Under a guard of Rifles and Carabineers, the Eighty-five were then brought forward, clad in their regimental uniforms —soldiers still ; and then the sentence was read aloud, which was to convert soldiers into felons. Their accoutrements were taken from them, and their uniforms were stripped from their backs. Then the armourers and the smiths came forward with their shackles and their tools. and soon, in the presence of that great concourse of their old comrades, the Eighty-five stood, with the outward symbols of their dire disgrace fastened upon them. It was a piteous spectacle, and many there were moved with a great compassion, when they

saw the despairing gestures of those wretched men, among whom were some of the very flower of the regiment-soldiers who had served the British Government in trying circumstances and in strange places, and who had never before wavered in their allegiance. Lifting up their hands and lifting up their voices, the prisoners implored the General to have mercy upon them, and not to consign them to so ignominious a doom. Then, seeing that there was no other hope, they turned to their comrades and reproached them for quietly suffering this disgrace to descend upon them. There was not a Sepoy present who did not feel the rising indignation in his throat. But in the presence of those loaded field-guns and those grooved rifles, and the glittering sabres of the Dragoons, there could not be a thought of striking. The prisoners were marched off to their cells, to be placed under the custody of a guard of their own countrymen."[21]

The effect of this scene upon the other sepoys and the people at large has been described by many writers on the authority of contemporary accounts. The comrades of the condemned sepoys fully shared the views for which the latter were imprisoned. As Malleson puts it, "they had not been insensible to the reproaches which their ironed and shackled comrades had cast upon them as they marched off, prisoners, to the gaol".[22] Their passive acquiescence, they felt, would bring eternal infamy and disgrace upon them. That this was no mere idle fear is borne out by the fact that the people at large, and even some courtesans, taunted the sepoys for their pusillanimity. No wonder, therefore, that the excitement of the sepoys at Mirat was not merely of a passive character, as was the case in Barrackpur. As Forrest puts it, the troopers "maddened by the spectacle at once prepared for a revolt from the English rule, and in order to rescue their comrades resolved to dare the worst extremity".[23] The details are not exactly known, but it is generally held that the sepoys, belonging to all the regiments, held counsels together, and

decided to rise in a body the very next day which, being a Sunday when the Europeans would be absent at the church, appeared to be very suitable for their purpose. On the other hand, there are grounds to believe that the outbreak was not definitely pre-arranged, but was precipitated on Sunday evening by the assemblage of the Rifles for Church parade, when suddenly a cry was raised, "the Rifles and Artillery are coming to disarm all the native regiments," and the sepoys, followed by a mob, rushed wildly to their lines.[24]

Whatever may be the circumstances leading to the actual outbreak, there is no doubt that the lead was taken by the Third Cavalry, to which regiment the condemned sepoys belonged. Several hundreds of them galloped to the jail and released not only their comrades but also its other inmates. Meanwhile the infantry regiments had grown restive, and their officers hastened to the lines to pacify them. They showed signs of submission, "when suddenly a trooper galloped past, and shouted out that the European troops were coming to disarm them".[25] One of the regiments, the 20th, immediately seized their muskets, but the other, the 11th, still hesitated. But at this juncture the commanding officer of the latter, Col. Finnis, who was remonstrating with his men, was fired upon by the men of the other regiment and was immediately killed. The 11th regiment at once joined the other mutineers.

Then followed a scene of indescribable horror and confusion. The sepoys were joined by the convicts released from jail and other *goonda* elements, and they all set out to slay the Europeans and burn and plunder their houses. They killed indiscriminately, not sparing even women or children and blazing houses all around threw their lurid light upon the scenes of plunder and desecration. It is probable, however, that this nefarious work, continued during the night, was done mostly by the criminals and the *goonda* elements who are never found wanting to take advantage of such a situation to serve their personal ends and criminal propensities. How-

soever we might apportion the guilt, Mirat set an example which was only too closely imitated, ere long, in numerous localities over a wide area. But, as will be shown later, the British troops were more than a match for their Indian colleagues, not only in military skill, but also in perpetrating such cruel deeds. The sepoys had sown the wind and the Indians reaped the whirlwind.

The sepoys at Mirat knew fully well that they could be easily crushed by the European troops of the station. So immediately after the first orgies of murder and plunder were over, they sat together to deliberate over their future line of action. There was no question that they must immediately leave Mirat, but the place of retreat was debated upon for a long time. It is generally held by the historians of the Mutiny that under a pre-arranged plan they marched towards Delhi almost immediately after the outbreak had begun. But we have it on the authority of Munshi Mohanlal, that the mutineers at Mirat had not at first any idea of coming to Delhi, and it was only settled after a long deliberation, in course of which they were fully convinced that the advantages of such a course were greater than those offered by any other. As Mohanlal says that he got this information from two sepoys of Mirat, it is reasonable to accept it in preference to others which are not supported by any positive evidence, and are based on imagination or inference based on insufficient data. As will be shown later, other evidences support the statement of Mohanlal.[26]

The sepoys must have left Mirat at the early hours of the night, for when a few hours after the outbreak, the British army, after inexplicable delay, had advanced to quell the disturbances, the sepoys were nowhere to be seen, either in the town or in the lines, and the soldiers had to wreak their vengeance on the unarmed plunderers alone. By an incredible folly the British commander did not take any measure to pursue the fleeing sepoys who, throughout their march to Delhi during that critical night, was apprehending at every

moment that they would be overtaken and overwhelmed by the pursuing British troops.

3. DELHI

The sepoys of Mirat reached Delhi soon after daybreak on the 11th of May. Those who arrived first went straight to the Red Fort, and requested Bahadur Shah to take the lead in the campaign which they had already begun. After a great deal of hesitation, Bahadur Shah at last agreed, and was proclaimed Emperor.[27] In the meantime, as more and more sepoys from Mirat arrived, the massacre of Europeans—men, women and children—began in full fury. There was no means of resistance, as both the civil and military authorities were taken completely unawares. Then the mutineers proceeded to the cantonment where the local sepoys readily joined them and cut off their own officers. Deserted by the sepoys, the remaining Europeans, both civil and military, fled from Delhi as best they could, and in less than a week not one of them was to be seen in that city. The great magazine, with its vast stores of ammunition, was blown up by the British officers themselves to prevent it from falling into the hands of the mutineers. The success of the mutineers was complete, and they became undisputed masters of the strongly fortified city of Delhi under the nominal authority of the titular Emperor Bahadur Shah.

Arrangements were made for the administration of the city, and the sons of the Emperor were placed in charge of the army. Later, Bakht Khan was made the supreme commander. But it was soon apparent that the sepoys were in no mood to obey the orders of Bahadur Shah or even to show due respect to him. On the other hand, they constantly clamoured for pay, plundered the wealthy citizens as well as the shop-keepers, quarrelled among themselves over the loot, and sometimes even heaped indignity and humiliation upon the Emperor and his queen whose loyalty to their cause they

suspected. On the whole, chaos and confusion prevailed in the city, as will be described in detail later on.[28]

But in spite of all these untoward factors, Delhi became the centre of the great movement, and mutineers from far and near proceeded there to make a common cause against the British. The strongly fortified walls of the city offered a protection and security which they badly needed at the initial stage, before the country as a whole caught the mutinous spirit, and the prestige of the Imperial house of Timurids served as a symbol for rallying heterogeneous elements round a common banner. So well was all this understood by the British, that they regarded the recapture of Delhi as the immediate and most important objective of their military campaigns. Thus the eyes of friends and foes alike were turned towards the Imperial city, and every reasonable man, not blinded by prejudices and passion engendered by ambition or self-interest, could easily perceive that the future of the entire movement depended upon the fate of Delhi.

FOOTNOTE

1. General Hearsey's letter, dated February 11, 1857, quoted in *A.S.*, 117.

2. *RP*, 18.

3. Evidence for this has been given later. The story of introducing greased cartridges in India goes back to 1853. Even then Col. Tucker drew the attention of the Military Board to the danger of issuing them to the sepoys. For a full account cf. *J. N. Banerjea Volume*, pp. 260 ff.

4. *Mal*, 44.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. The suggestion was made in the *Englishman*, a Calcutta Daily, on February 3, 1857. I am indebted to Dr. S. B. Chaudhuri for this information.

8. These and other incidents, to which reference is made in this Chapter, are well-known episodes, mentioned in all standard books on the Mutiny. Hence they are not described in detail, and no reference to authorities is given.

9. N. I. stands for 'Native Infantry'. The figure is that of the Regiment.

10. The account is based on K, I. 501 ff., and Holmes, 82. Malleson takes a somewhat different view of Mitchell's conduct (*Mal.* 40 ff.).

11. *Mal*, 42.

12. Holmes, 84.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid, 84-5.

15. Ibid, 88.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid, 95.

19. Malleson gives the date as 6th May (*Mal.* 62), but this is evidently wrong.

20. Roberts-II, 49 f.n.; K, I. 558, f.n. For this and other views supporting the objection of the sepoys to use greased cartridges, cf. Book IV, Ch. III.

21. K, II. 51-2.

22. *Mal.* 64.

23. *FM*, I. 34.

24. Holmes says he was "convinced of this by the argument of Colonel G. W. Williams, who collected a vast amount of evidence on the subject." He also quotes the statement of a witness that "the said regiments did not plot anything beforehand. Had they done so, they would not have kept their wives and children with them as they did." "Other witnesses gave similar replies" (Holmes, p. 98). On the other hand, as will be related in Book IV. Ch. I, the probability of a mutiny at Mirat was known in Delhi before May 10. It appears that while a Mutiny was talked about at Mirat for some days, no definite arrangement was made, and no particular date was fixed, and the actual outbreak was due to a sudden impulse on May 10.

25. Holmes, 99.

26. This point will be further discussed in Book IV, Ch. I, with reference to authorities.

27. Cf. Book III, Ch. I.

28. Cf. Book III, Chs. I and VI.

CHAPTER II

THE SPREAD OF THE MUTINY[1]

1. A GENERAL OUTLINE

The news of the mutiny of sepoys at Mirat, followed immediately by the capture of Delhi and the declaration of Bahadur Shah as the Emperor of Hindusthan, created a great sensation all over India. Its immediate reactions could be found in an abortive rising of the sepoys at Firozpur on May 13, and the outbreak of violent disturbances at Muzaffarnagar[1] followed by the mutiny of sepoys, on the 14th. These two minor incidents apart, the sepoys, the civil population, as well as the *goonda* elements, although highly excited by "the most exaggerated reports of the total collapse of British rule", remained in animated suspense for a week. Evidently, they regarded it as a mere accident or a passing phase, and expected at any moment to hear of the restoration of British authority. But as days passed, and every one of them brought evidence of lethargy and inactivity on the part of the British and stories of their disgrace and discomfiture in Delhi, the signs of reaction began to show themselves. A series of mutinies of sepoys, followed in many cases by the revolt of civil population, convulsed nearly the whole of Northern India. The first to rise was a detachment of sepoys at Aligarh on May 20, 1857. At first they remained not only unmoved, but quite loyal, and even delivered to the authorities a Brahman who had plotted to murder British officers. But when the conspirator was hanged in their presence, a sepoy pointed to the quivering body, and exclaimed to his comrades, "Behold ! a martyr to our religion". The effect was almost instantaneous. The sepoys rose in a body, drove away their officers, and left for Delhi. This was followed by mutinies in the Panjab, at Naushera, on May 21, and Hoti Mardan during the next two or three days ; but these were easily put down. Far more serious, however, were the series of mutinies

in Avadh and North-Western Provinces,—at Etawa and Mainpuri (May 23), Rurki (May 25). Etah (May 27), Hodal, Mathura, and Lakhnau (May 30), Bareilly and Shahjahanpur (May 31), Moradabad and Budaon (June 1), Azamgarh and Sitapur (June 3), Malaon, Mohamdi, Varanasi (Banaras) and Kanpur (Cawnpore) (June 4), Jhansi and Allahabad (June 6), Fyzabad (June 7), Dariabad and Fatepur (June 9), Fategarh (June 18), Hathras (July 1), and several other localities.

In general these mutinies followed the pattern set by Mirat, The sepoys killed the officers and other Europeans on whom they could lay their hands, in many cases sparing neither women nor children. They also released the prisoners from jail, plundered the treasury, burnt Government offices, and then either set out for Delhi, or joined some local chiefs, or roamed at large, seeking to enrich themselves by indiscriminate plunder of both Indians and Europeans. There were, of course, exceptions to their general cruelty towards their late masters. In some cases the British officers were allowed to depart without any harm befalling them, and there are even instances where the sepoys watched over their safety during their flight. Thus, though many British officers and the members of their family were killed, many also succeeded in escaping to places of safety. Except in rare instances, as at Lakhnau (Lucknow) and Kanpur, the Europeans, or rather those among them that escaped or survived the massacre, quitted their stations.

The mutinies in some regions, notably Avadh, Rohilkhand and West Bihar, soon merged themselves into revolts of civil population against the British authority under local leaders. These will be described in the next chapter. A brief account of the mutiny in other parts of India is given below.

2. KANPUR

The mutiny of sepoys at Kanpur will be discussed in detail in connection with Nana Sahib in Book III, Ch. II. Only a brief outline is given here.

Late at night on June 4, the 2nd Cavalry, and an hour or two later, the 1st Native Infantry mutinied, but did not attack their officers. The 56th N. I. joined the mutiny on the morning of the 5th, but the 53rd N. I. remained loyal. They resisted the pressure of the other sepoys to join them and were peacefully engaged in their daily avocations when 'Ashe's battery opened upon them by Sir Hugh Wheeler's command and they were literally driven by nine-pounders'. A detachment of this regiment posted at the treasury fought for four hours against the rebel sepoys. The loyal remnant of this regiment, 'though prepared to stand by their officers till the last, were not admitted into the entrenchment and were ultimately dismissed with a few rupees each and a certificate of fidelity'.[2] This is not the only instance where the panic of the British, not altogether unjustified, led to suspicion, and suspicion led to mutiny or desertion of troops who would probably have otherwise remained faithful.

The mutinous sepoys, as could be easily anticipated, made straight for the treasury at Nawabgunge, and Nana's retainers probably fraternised with them. The faithful sepoys of the 53rd N. I. held their ground for four hours but as no relief came, were overpowered and fled. The mutineers rifled the treasury, released the prisoners in jail, and took possession of the magazine. Then they marched towards Delhi and reached Kalyanpur, the first stage of the road, on the 5th. The sepoys, however, soon changed their mind. Instead of proceeding to Delhi they returned to Kanpur and Nana Sahib became their leader.

Sir Hugh Wheeler, the British Commander, must have heaved a sigh of relief when he heard that the mutineers had proceeded towards Delhi, as he fully expected. But early in the morning of the sixth he received a letter from Nana himself warning him to expect an attack[3]. Signs of the returning sepoys were visible from afar. For the sepoys were, as usual, busy plundering the citizens, burning their houses and killing stray Europeans. After all this was finished, the

sepoys turned their attention to the entrenchment where the British soldiers and civil population had taken shelter.

Even before the sepoys actually broke out into mutiny General Hugh Wheeler had hastily constructed a place of refuge for the British community. It consisted of two one-storied barracks, made of brick, but one of them had only a thatched roof. These were surrounded by a shallow trench and a mud wall about four feet in height. This entrenchment constituted a defence of a very frail character, but nevertheless its construction and the removal of women and children into it on 21 May were irritating to the sepoys who could see in it a clear evidence that their officers had no confidence in their loyalty. Into this miserable defence were now huddled up 900 souls, comprising about four hundred English fighting men, of whom more than seventy were invalids, and about 376 women and children; the rest were Indians including 20 sepoys, 44 regimental musicians and 50 servants. They had to defend themselves against three thousand armed sepoys, well armed and supplied with all munitions of war.

But in spite of the disparity of numbers and the weakness of the defence, the defenders held out till June 25. Nothing is stranger in the whole history of the outbreak of 1857, than the ignominious failure of Kunwar Singh to take Boyle's house at Arrah[3a] and of Nana to overcome the flimsy defence at Kanpur, and these must ever redound to the eternal discredit of these two redoubtable heroes of the Mutiny.

The military operations at Kanpur may be briefly told. At first the sepoys merely bombarded the entrenchment, and day and night hurled a continuous shower of shot, and shell, and bullets. Once, on June 12, they made an assault, but turned back after a few sepoys had been killed by the fire of the enemy. On June 23, they made another assault, but were "hurled back as before, in ignominious rout". On June 25, "a woman came into the entrenchment, with a letter from the Nana, offering a safe passage to Allahabad to every

member of the garrison who had not been "connected with the acts of Lord Dalhousie". The offer was accepted and a regular treaty was signed on the 26th". It was provided that the entrenchment should be evacuated and boats with food supply would be provided by Nana for taking the besieged to Allahabad. In pursuance of this agreement, on the morning of June 27, the besieged Englishmen got into forty boats kept ready for them at the *Sati Chaura ghat.* As soon as the last man had stepped into the boat, a bugle was heard and all the native boatmen jumped over and waded to the shore. Some Englishmen *immediately* fired upon them. Then the very sepoys who escorted the last batch of Englishmen to the *ghat* opened fire with their carbines. The fire was returned by the Englishmen and the sepoys retired. Shortly the troops and guns posted by the riverside came into action. One boat caught fire and the conflagration spread to the neighbouring boats all of which had thatched roofs. Many, particularly the sick and the wounded, were burnt to death, while the rest, including some women with children in their arms, took to the river. Many of these were killed, and a number of them were made captives. A single boat escaped, but it was later seized, and only four of its occupants fled with their lives to tell the tale of this ghastly tragedy[4].

3. BENGAL AND BIHAR

Bengal was practically unaffected by the Mutiny with the exception of two sporadic outbursts at Dacca and Chittagong. On November 18, the 34th N. I. at Chittagong mutinied and followed the usual procedure. They found no sympathy among the people and, being defeated by the loyal native regiment, marched northwards through Sylhet and Cachar. Being defeated, they turned towards the east and were joined by some discontented chiefs of Manipur living in Cachar. But they could not enter Manipur, whose ruler, at the request of the British, sent his troops and captured a number of them. These were handed over to the British and the rest betook

themselves to the neighbouring hills and jungles. On November 22, the troops at Dacca refused to be disarmed and mutinied, but being defeated, fled towards Jalpaiguri. There were some desultory outbreaks in the Bhagalpur Division, and two cavalry detachments at Madariganj and Jalpaiguri mutinied. But these as well as the mutineers from Dacca were easily dispersed and forced to seek refuge in Nepal.

In Bihar, the most important military station was Danapur (Dinapore), near Patna, which was an important strategic position commanding the land and river-routes from Calcutta to Upper India. The sepoys were loyal during the month of June and the better part of July. Nevertheless, suspicion grew and William Tayler, the Commissioner of Patna, urged upon the Government that the sepoys should be disarmed at once. The Government left the final decision to the Commanding Officer at Danapur who, after some hesitation, followed a *via media*. Without inflicting upon the sepoys the dishonour of laying down their arms, he decided merely to take away their percussion caps, and thereby render their fire-arms harmless. In the morning, on 25 July, the European troops were drawn up and the caps were carted away from the magazine past the indignant sepoys. In the afternoon, when the European troops were busy eating their dinners, another parade was held and the sepoys were asked to surrender the contents of the cap cases which they carried on their persons. "They answered the demand by firing on the officers". The Commanding Officer was away on a steamer in the river to prevent the sepoys from crossing it, and the other officers hesitated to take any decisive action. So the mutineers repossessed themselves of the caps that had been taken from the magazine and marched towards the Son river. As the Son was swollen and difficult to cross, they could have been easily overtaken. But the folly of Mirat was repeated, and the sepoys were not pursued. They safely reached Arrah where Kunwar Singh, a Rajput *Zamindar*, joined them and

converted the mutiny into a general revolt, as will be described in the next Chapter.

The first symptoms of mutiny in Bihar were displayed by three sepoys of 32nd N. I. on 12 June, 1857. They were hanged and the Regiment was removed to Bhagalpur. Mutiny also broke out in several other places. In August some sepoys mutinied, came to Noada, destroyed the public buildings (September 8), and then marched towards Gaya. Rattray, with a small force of Sikhs and Europeans, advanced from Gaya to meet them, but the sepoys inflicted heavy loss upon this force and entered Gaya. There they liberated the prisoners and attacked the fortified house where the European residents had taken refuge, but failed to take it. The sepoys also mutinied at Deogarh, but were dispersed after a severe contest. The Ramgarh battalions mutinied at Hazaribagh, Purulia, Chaibassa and Sambalpur[4a].

4. CENTRAL INDIA AND RAJASTHAN

The mutiny rapidly spread to the south of the Yamuna river. The first to be affected was the sepoys at Jhansi. There were two forts at Jhansi, a small one in the Cantonment, and another outside it. On June 5, 1857, some sepoys peacefully took possession of the small fort under some pretext. On June 6, there was a mutiny of the whole force according to a pre-concerted plan, in which some persons, outside the army, also seem to have taken part. Some officers were killed or injured, and the rest of the Europeans took shelter in the other fort, also outside the town. On June 8, the mutineers promised personal security to all the Europeans provided they left the fort without taking any arms. But as soon as they came out of the fort, all of them—men, women, and children—were taken to a garden and massacred in cold blood. According to one account, 57 men, 12 women, and 23 children perished in this way, but another account sets the total number as 72. The mutineers proceeded to Delhi three days after this nefarious deed.

The news of the mutiny at Jhansi led to that of the sepoys at Nowgong, who formed detachments of the Jhansi regiment, on June 10. On June 14, the sepoys in the Gwalior Contingent, recruited from Avadh, mutinied, and killed as many Europeans as they could, but allowed the women to go unharmed. For a long time this formidable body of well-equipped sepoys, though mutinous, had remained idle at Gwalior in the vain hope of being led by Sindhia against the British, though they might have played a dominant, if not decisive, part in the mutiny of Central India, Delhi, Agra or Kanpur. When they at last actually mutinied, it was too late for them to play any effective part.

At Indore the troops belonging to Holkar mutinied on July 1, and three hundred Bhils and two Companies of the Bhopal Cavalry, which formed part of the British garrison, were brought to oppose them. But ere long they cast in their lot with the mutineers. In the words of Ball, "by one impulse the whole of the troops that had assisted in the defence...... deserted to the mutineers, threatening at the same time to shoot the officers if they ventured to interfere with them." Some Europeans were murdered, treasury was looted, and public property destroyed. The mutiny at Indore was followed by that at Mhow. Mutiny also broke out in several places in the Sagar and Narmada territories towards the end of June.

At Dhar, the Arab and Afghan mercenaries in the service of the Raja rose against the British. A number of Sindhia's troops had seized Mandasor and were shortly joined by a part of the mutinous cavalry of the Gwalior Contingent aud other insurgent hordes, including Afghan and Mekrani Muslims. The leader of this motley body was Shahzada Firuz Shah, a direct descendant of the Mughul Emperors of Delhi, who had already declared a *jihad* against the British. He seized the town of Mandasor and formally installed himself as king. He "addressed circular letters to the neighbouring princes of Pratabgarh, Jawra, Sitamau, Ratlam, and the Chief of

Salumbar, calling upon them to acknowledge the new power, but none responded except Abdul Sattar Khan, a scion of the ruling house of Jawra." By September the number of his followers increased to about eighteen thousand, and he sent troops against Nimach in November. They defeated a contingent force at Jiran and laid siege to the fort, but had soon to face the British troops under Henry Marion Durand, the Agent of the Governor-General in Central India, who had already suppressed the mutiny at Dhar. Firuz Shah's troops were defeated at Garoria and he himself fled from Mandasor which was retaken by the British. But his career did not end here and he occasionally emerged as a leader of the mutiny at far distant places, as will be described later.

Rajasthan, though generally unaffected, had its share, and the troops at the two important military stations, namely, Nasirabad and Nimach, mutinied respectively on May 28 and June 3. They followed the usual pattern and, after having plundered the cantonment and burnt many bungalows, proceeded towards Delhi. The people remained quiet, and the Rajput chiefs, particularly the Raja of Jodhpur, helped the British. The only exception was Thakur Kusal Singh, the Chief of Ahua or Awah, who had some specific grievances against the British. He joined the mutineers and defeated not only the troops of Jodhpur but also a British force under Captain Mason. But in spite of heroic resistance he ultimately surrendered.[5] There was also a mutiny at Kotah where the rebel troops took possession of the city and kept the Maharaja a prisoner. But after six months they were defeated by the British forces.

5. THE DECCAN

The country south of the Narmada remained free from disturbances of a serious nature, though the mutinous spirit was not absent among the sepoys, and a strong feeling of disaffection against the British prevailed in many parts.

On July 17, 1857, there was a rising in Hyderabad. About

five hundred Rohillas, headed by Maulavi Alauddin and the Rohilla leader, Torabaz Khan, followed by a large mob, attacked the Residency, but were easily repulsed. The Indian troops remained loyal and faithful, and there was no further trouble.[6]

Raja Venkatappa Naik of Shorapur, a small principality in the District of Gulburga, rebelled early in 1858. He was told that the English had lost everything and were flying to England, that the Arabs and Rohillas of Hyderabad and all the Mussalmans had declared a crusade against the English, and the Brahmans from Poona promised by their incantations to make him Raja of the whole country from Shorapur to Rameshwar. Hopes were also held out for a general rising of the Marathas. The Raja collected a force, about five to seven thousand strong, consisting of Arabs, Rohillas and Bedars, and attacked the British camp at night on February 7, 1858. As soon as British reinforcement arrived, he surrendered.[7]

The Maratha country also was not altogether free from troubles. There was a plot at Nagpur and it was reported that the First Cavalry would rise on June 13, 1857, and being joined by citizens, murder the Christians. But the major part of the sepoys remained loyal and the Cavalry was disarmed.

Further south, at Satara, there was a plot by one Rango Bapuji to release the prisoners, plunder the treasury, and attack the cantonments. The Magistrate arrested the chief conspirators on June 12, 1857. Rungo Bapuji fled, and his followers were dispersed.

These troubles were mainly caused by the recent annexation of these two States by the Doctrine of Lapse, as there was a strong sympathy for the adopted sons who were deprived of their estates. Besides, the feudatory chiefs at Satara, with a single exception, had no son, and knew that their adopted sons would not be permitted to succeed them. They were, therefore, naturally anxious to overthrow the British Government.[8]

The sepoys at Kolhapur mutinied on July 31, 1857, and after plundering the treasury marched towards the town. As the gates were closed, they returned to the lines, while the rest were dispersed in different directions. Reinforcement of European troops having arrived from Bombay, the sepoys were disarmed. Twenty-one ringleaders were convicted. Two were hanged, eleven shot, and eight blown away from the guns.

On December 5, 1857, there was an insurrection at Kolhapur, and the rebels closed the city-gate. But the British troops blew open the gates, and the rebels fled. Thirty-six men were convicted and executed then and there. It was believed that the rebellion was instigated by the brother of the Kolhapur Raja at the instance of Nana Sahib. There were causes of disaffection which had already provoked an insurrection in 1844, as noted above[9]. Besides, "the chiefs and smaller landowners of Southern Maratha country still smarted from the wounds inflicted upon them from the Enam Commission ; to many of them had been denied the privilege of adopting heirs to their estates."[10]

Baba Sahib, the Chief of Nurgund near Kolhapur, rebelled and killed Charles Manson, the Political Agent of Southern Maratha country, on May 29, 1858, but was soon defeated and executed.

In general the Bombay army remained loyal, but there were some sepoys who shared the feelings of their comrades in Northern India. Attempts at mutiny failed at Ahmedabad and Hyderabad in Sindh, and though a mutiny actually broke out at Karachi, it was easily put down. On the whole, the Bombay Presidency, though seething with discontent and disaffection, remained quiet.

6. THE PANJAB

There were no serious troubles in the Panjab, for as soon as the news of Mirat and Delhi reached Lahore, the authorities decided to disarm the sepoys. In most places the disarm-

ing took place smoothly. In Lahore 2500 sepoys, confronted by 600 European troops, laid down their arms without any protest. At Firozpur, one of the sepoy regiments quietly gave up arms, but two hundred sepoys of the other mutinied. The rest left the station but was pursued. Some went to Patiala and were imprisoned there by its Sikh ruler ; others were arrested by the villagers and taken to the authorities ; and the remnant reached Delhi.

Preparations were made to disarm the regiments of sepoys at Jullundur, but in spite of the help rendered by the Raja of Kapurthala, the authorities had to change the date of arrangement twice for want of adequate European troops. The sepoys having got an inkling of this rose in arms and marched to Ludhiana. The Deputy Commissioner, helped by the Raja of Nabha and with a small number of troops, failed to arrest their progress. On reaching Ludhiana the mutineers, "aided by the native garrison and the populace, attacked the houses of Government officials, released the prisoners, plundered the native traders, and finally marched for Delhi " Ludhiana was an important strategic point commanding the Grand Trunk Road. But the sepoys made no attempt to occupy it. It is said that in their hurry to leave Jullundur they had taken blank instead of balled ammunition. But even the very brief presence of the sepoys at Ludhiana had the usual consequence. "Arson, murder, highway robbery, cattle-lifting and dacoity suddenly revived; and some of the offenders, when apprehended, naively accounted for their misconduct by confessing that they had believed the rule of the British to be over". A punitive fine was imposed on the city and its population were disarmed.[11]

The sepoys at Kangra laid down their arms without any protest. The more difficult task of disarming two thousand sepoys at Multan with the help of 60 Europeans and loyal Indian troops was also smoothly accomplished. At Peshawar three thousand sepoys and five hundred sowars were disarmed without any difficulty, but a Company ran away under cover

of night. They were hunted by the tribesmen, for prices were set on their heads, and many of them were blown away from the guns'. An interesting episode occurred at Hoti Mardan. The British officers of the 55th N. I., stationed there, regarded the sepoys as thoroughly reliable, and were opposed to the idea of disarming them. When troops were sent from Peshawar for that purpose, the Commanding Officer, by way of protest, committed suicide. The 55th fled, but were remorselessly pursued. More than a hundred were killed, three to four hundred wounded, and about 120 were captured. The rest entered Swat. "Proclaiming themselves religious martyrs, they persuaded the king to take them into his service; and for a moment there seemed a danger that they might return with renewed strength to menace the Punjab. The virtual ruler of Swat was an aged priest, known as the Akhund. Had he espoused their cause, and, taking them with him, swept down upon the Peshawar valley and preached a holy war against the infidels, he might have kindled the smouldering religious zeal of the population into such a flame as would have, perhaps, consumed the fabric of British power. Fortunately, instead of doing this, he expelled them from the country, only granting them guides to conduct them across the Indus. Then, in their misery, they resolved to throw themselves upon the mercy of the Maharaja of Kashmir". But at the instigation of the Deputy Commissioner, the Zamindars and clansmen occupied, all the passes and the mutineers were forced to enter Kohistan where, in course of traversing the almost trackless rugged hills, many were drowned, and many stoned or slain in battle by the mountaineers whom the Deputy Commissioner hounded on against them. The remnants surrendered, and most of them were either hanged or blown away from guns.[12]

Movable columns disarmed the sepoys at several cantonments, and there was no resistance except in a few places. At Jhelum the sepoys resisted, but were either killed or captured. The Raja of Kashmir arrested those who fled to Kashmir and handed them over to the British. Stray fugitives

were captured by the villagers. The sepoys at Sialkot also mutinied, killed a few, and then left for Hoshiarpur. They were, however, pursued and destroyed. With a few minor exceptions, noted above, the sepoys surrendered their arms without any protest; some were even obliging enough to carry their arms to the bungalow of the commander.

Thus the mutiny in the Panjāb had some distinctive features. In the few cases where it occurred, it was, without exception, the result of attempt to disarm the sepoys. Secondly, the sepoys in the Panjāb nowhere succeeded in establishing their authority like their confreres in Avadh and Rohilkhand. Thirdly, very severe measures were taken against sepoys who were not disloyal or hostile, but whose only offence was to make an attempt to save themselves from the disgrace of being disarmed by flight.

But even some of the disarmed sepoys met with a tragic end. The disarmed 26th N. I. at Mian-Mir fled from the camp in a body on July 30, and being intercepted by two officers, killed them. How they were ultimately overtaken by Mr. Cooper, and he took a terrible. almost barbarous, vengeance on them, will be related in Book II, Chapter V.

With the exception of a small garrison in Khelat-i-Ghilzai, the sepoys throughout the Panjāb were disarmed, in spite of their past record, merely on suspicion. But the authorities in the Panjāb had something more to their credit. They raised levies of turbulent frontier Pathans. "It was a master stroke of policy to enlist these turbulent people and remove them from their native districts where they might prove a constant source of worry and anxiety, and to take them far beyond the five rivers where their military instincts and greed for plunder would have the fullest play. The sepoys had gone to Lahore, Multan, Peshawar and Bannu as the instrument of the British imperial policy. The table was now turned on them, and the Panjābi Muslim and the Sikh, the tribesmen of Kohat and the Yusufzai country were united

against the Hindustanis, Muslims and non-Muslims, by the common hatred they bore against them."[13]

FOOTNOTES

1. The incidents described in this Chapter are based on standard authorities on the history of the Mutiny (K., M., Sen, Holmes *etc.*), and it has not been considered necessary to give detailed references.

For full references cf. *HCIP*, Vol. IX, Ch. XVI.

2. Sen, 136-7

3. Holmes, 228. Kaye gives the date as 7 June (Vol. II. 313). The object of writing this letter is not apparent (cf. Sen, 138-9). To those who are not obsessed with the idea of Nana's treachery from the very beginning, the letter may justly appear to be the last friendly act of Nana towards the British, by way of previous warning of the changed role he would be henceforth forced to play, so far as his relation with the British was concerned.

3a. This will be discussed later.

4. This is based on the account of Mowbray Thomson, one of the four survivors.

4a. For details cf. *PIHRC*, XXI, Part II, pp. 12ff.

5. For a detailed account, cf. Sen, 319-20.

6. H. G. Briggs, *The Nizam*, II, 80-81.

7. Meadows Taylor. *The story of My Life*, 313-4

8. Holmes. 447.

9. See pp. 49-50.

10. Holmes, 448.

11. Ibid. 330-32.

12. Ibid, 327-28.

13. Sen, 334.

CHAPTER III

THE REVOLT OF THE PEOPLE

1. THE IMMEDIATE CAUSE AND GENERAL VIEW OF THE REVOLT

The success of the mutineers at various places, and the massacre or flight of the local British officials, in particular their abandonment of the city of Delhi into the hands of the mutineers, led the people all over Rohilkhand and Avadh to believe that the British *raj* had ceased to exist. No visible symbol was left of its authority in many localities, and there was almost a complete political vacuum and lack of any kind of authority. In all ages and countries such a situation affords the best opportunity for popular outbreaks, varying in nature, according to the circumstances and temperament of the different types of people.

As already mentioned above,[1] all classes of people in India were thoroughly discontented and disaffected against the British. It is, therefore, quite natural, and no extraordinary phenomenon, that there should be a general rising of the people against the hated *feringhees* wherever the success of the mutiny had destroyed their power and authority. Hopes of personal gain also undoubtedly operated to a large extent among all classes, and were the sole motive of many, notably the *goonda* elements and those professional classes who were accustomed to live by plunder, such as the Gujars, Ranghars, Jats etc.

Another class, which was powerfully influenced by motives of self-interest and contributed largely to the origin and prolongation of the popular revolt, was the one connected with the land. The Muslim *Zamindars*, who predominated in the *Doab* region, rose with enthusiasm to take part in a

religious war, and joined their brethren with the object of exterminating the English and restoring the Mughal Government. In the trans-Gangetic region the causes of revolt were different. The *Talukdars* of Avadh, who had lost their lands by the new system of land tenure, immediately rose as a class and resumed the lands, which had been taken away from them, by forcibly ejecting their new masters who had purchased them at auction sale. The *Talukdars* had not only a powerful motive but also a strong incentive to revolt by the strength and security of their position. Their numbers were great and they had a common cause to fight for. They were well armed and almost every *Talukdar* had a fort surrounded by dense jungles. It has been estimated that in course of the suppression of the outbreak "1572 forts had been destroyed and 714 cannon, exclusive of those taken in action, surrendered."[2]

The cultivators and other elements of people also joined in the fray, and mostly cast in their lots with the *Talukdars*. For, although they had not the same grievances as the *Talukdars*, there were other considerations which moved them. In the first place the recent annexation of Avadh was universally disliked and looked upon as a great act of injustice, for whatever might have been the degree of misrule of the Nawab, there is not the least doubt that the people preferred the old regime to the foreign occupation. Secondly, the sepoys who mutinied were their own kith and kin, and were fighting for the cause of religion which was equally dear to them.

Besides, the cultivators and poorer classes still continued to look upon the *Talukdars* with greater regard than the purchaser at auction, however long the latter might have been in possession of the property. "The ex-*zemindar* and his family were still the most influential residents of the village. In most instances, they received a kind of tribute from the poorer inhabitants, and helped them in return......

"The auction purchaser, on the other hand, was generally a resident of the city, and never visited his village, except for

the hateful purpose of collecting his rents, or enforcing his decrees. The people, therefore, naturally sided with the *zemindars* to whom the outbreaks seemed a grand opportunity of recovering their position. They first set to work to destroy and plunder everything European, and took forcible possession of their old estates. Of course, the auction purchasers were our friends, and rendered every assistance in their power for the restoration of order."[3]

Personal gain or satisfaction of personal ambition, which impelled the people to rebel, took many forms. The leaders and grandees thought of recovering the territories, honours and privileges they had lost, gaining new lands and wealth within easy reach, or paying off old scores against an enemy, —a natural instinct from which they were hitherto restrained by the rule of law established by the British. Some were eager to seize this golden opportunity of making amends for the grievous injuries they had suffered in the hands of the British. Less important persons sought to remove the sources of their misery and humiliation by (i) destroying the bonds for loans or title-deeds of land deposited with the *baniyas* at the time of borrowing money at high rate of interest which threatened to ruin them; and (2) killing the oppressive landlords or indigo-planters who had hitherto treated them as serfs. They welcomed, if not initiated, the revolt, because it did away with the inconvenient necessity of paying taxes to the Government and rent to the landowners, ushered in freedom from all vexatious restraints imposed by authority, and above all, meant the end of the various sources of discontent which the British rule had introduced in the country.

In many cases the outbreak was merely a continuation or revival of the acts of resistance discussed in Book I Chapter III, and many revolts were inspired by the same or similar causes.

It is possible that less selfish motives were also at work. The general discontent and disaffection against the British made some persons anxious to put an end to their rule, and

they seized the god-sent opportunity to drive away the hated *feringhees*, now that they had lost the only prop of their rule in India, namely, the allegiance of the sepoys.

Some Muslim leaders and Maulavis were fired by the ambition of restoring Muslim rule in India. A few leaders, both Hindu and Muslim, might have been urged by the noble instinct of achieving freedom from foreign yoke, although their vision did not extend to the whole of India, and was limited to the narrow horizon of their own locality.

While these and other causes produced local revolts over an extensive area, it is significant to note that there was no common end, common plan, or common organization. In most cases the outbreaks were purely local affairs, and attempts to put in a joint resistance to the British were few and far between.

Another significant feature was that though the beginnings of the revolt were marked by timidity and hesitation, after the people had made their choice they often resisted the mighty British force with valour and heroism, sometimes to a remarkable degree. Once they had crossed the Rubicon, many rebels never looked back.

There are reasons to believe that an attempt was made to prepare the ground for a popular revolt against the British by a number of persons, notably some Muslim Maulavis. The best known among them is Maulavi Ahmadulla of Fyzabad, to whom reference will be made in Book III, Ch. V.

While we shall not minimise the importance of this factor, it is difficult, in the present state of our knowledge, to find out, or even to make a general estimate of, the extent to which it influenced the outbreak of 1857. Dr. S. B. Chaudhuri, who regards the outbreak as a war of national independence, has given a long and detailed account of a patriots' meeting held on May 1, 1857, at Shahjahanpur, at the house of Mazhar Karim.[4] He gives the names of the persons, both Hindus and Muslims, who atttended the meeting, and long extracts from the speech of Sarfarazali, the Gorakhpur

Maulavi. The speech would do credit to the most seditious extremist in India in the first two decades of the twentieth century, if we only substitute religious frenzy in place of political aspirations for freedom as the impelling motive.

The Maulavi concluded his speech by reminding his audience that the centenary of the Battle of Plassey 'approaches', and asking them, "have I your unanimous vote to declare that the *Kafir* brood shall be stamped out on that date ? The whole assembly with one voice cried out: No, sooner than that." The scene of frenzied enthusiasm that followed need not be described. "Nothing", says Dr. Chaudhuri, "illustrates more strikingly the spirit of contumacy and revolt which seized the people" than this speech. He admits that "the authenticity of this seditious speech cannot indeed be vouched for". But what he omits to say is that the whole scene, including the speech, is taken from a novel written in 1896 on the basis of the tale of Mariam, a victim of the outbreak of 1857. The author heard the story of Mariam from her own lips but added the necessary setting from his own imagination, for he candidly confesses that he was writing a novel and not history. The speech of Maulavi Sarfarazali has, therefore, no more historical value than the speeches put by poet Nabinchandra Sen in the mouths of Rani Bhabani, Raja Rajballabh, and other alleged conspirators against Siraj-ud-daulla, at the beginning of his famous *Kāvya* (epic poem) *Palasir Yuddha.* It would be against all canons of historical criticism to accept, as Dr. Chaudhuri has done, the alleged speech of Sarfarazali, as "typical of the attitude of the general body of the rebels". If no better evidence can be furnished, the least that one can do is to profess ignorance of what that attitude was, and merely take note of the different motives, noted above, that impelled different classes and types of persons. For, this rests upon the unimpeachable testimony of actual facts. They show that the civil population was undoubtedly spurred on to revolt because of the grave discontent and resentment which

different classes of people nursed in their hearts for different reasons, but if the mutiny had not extinguished the local authority, the civil population would not have dared to revolt. The people's revolt was the effect, and not the cause, of the mutiny.

The outbreak at Muzaffarnagar,[5] on May 14, the earliest instance of civil revolt, may appear to be an exception, for there was no mutiny of local troops preceding it. But when carefully analyzed, it also illustrates the general rule. The revolt was precipitated by the action of Mr. Berford, the Magistrate and Collector. He was unnerved by the news of the mutiny at Mirat, followed by the exaggerated and false account of the imminent approach of mutinous troops towards Muzaffarnagar. He at once ordered the Public Offices to be closed for three days. On the 12th evening he heard that the convicts in jail would rise that night, and he immediately fled through the jungle to a village where he spent the night, during which nothing occurred in Muzaffarnagar. On the 13th some officers' bungalows were burnt by the villagers, at the instigation, it is said, of the local 'Syud *zamindars*'. It was then decided by Berford to remove the treasure to the Tehseel on the 14th. The Treasury-guard refused to do it and broke open the treasure chests. They took away as much as they could carry and left. A number of people who were near by plundered the rest. As there were no regular sepoys, the Magistrate drew off the jail-guard for his own defence, and released the prisoners. As Mr. Grant, at that time the Joint Magistrate and Deputy Collector, says in his report, the people were convinced by this act that the Government rule had ceased to exist. They saw that they could with impunity commit any excesses, that nobody interfered or meddled with them, and that even the incendiaries captured on the previous day were set free with others. The Civil, Criminal, and Collectorate *dufturs* were burnt by the people that night (May 14), and Mr. Grant was decidedly of opinion that the destruction of the records was brought about by the Syuds and

that those individuals had spread the false tales of approaching mutineers and dacoits, and had induced them to take shelter in Aboopoorah with the sole object of getting them out of the way and burning the office papers in their absence. Mr. Grant also suspected the Tashildars and Kotwal of conniving at such destruction. Violent crimes of all kinds were daily, almost hourly, committed throughout the district, not secretly or by night, but openly and at noon day. It is needless naming the chief crimes; it is sufficient to remark that here, as in other parts of the country the *baniyas* and *mahajans* were in the majority of cases the victims and "fearfully have many of them been made to suffer for their previous rapacity and avarice".[6]

The same scene was enacted at Saharanpur. "The news of the outbreak at Meerut reached Saharanpur on the 12th of May......The Goojurs and Ranghurs at once commenced plundering; and when the disturbances began in the Moozuffurnagar district, disquiet spread through that of Saharanpur. At first bankers were robbed, or had to pay for exemption from plunder; money-lenders and traders were forced to give up their books of accounts, and vouchers for debts; old feuds were renewed; the first outbreaks were to pay off old feuds, or to clear off accounts, or for the sake of plunder.........In examining the extent of the damage inflicted by the 'dacoits' at Naukoor, it appeared that all the *mohullas* had been attacked and gutted......All the government records with the *mahajun's* accounts, bonds, etc., were torn up and scattered over the neighbouring gardens......"

As in Muzzaffarnagar, so in Saharanpur, the notorious lawless elements broke out into an orgy of riots at the news of Mirat, even before the local sepoys had actually mutinied. According to the official narrative, on which the above account is based, the disturbances in the commencement were less directed against the Government than against particular castes. Ancient tribe or caste feuds were renewed, and the *zamindars* and villagers took advantage of the general

anarchy to obtain from the *mahajans* and the *baniyas* their books of business and bond-debts, etc. When the fall of Delhi ceased to be looked upon as imminent, the agricultural communities began to turn their eyes towards the local treasuries and did not scruple to oppose themselves to Government officers and troops[7].

But the character of the risings continued to be the same after the sepoys had mutinied, killed their officers and released the prisoners in jail. In two respects alone a difference was noticeable. In the first place, the risings became widespread, particularly in Avadh and Rohilkhand, and secondly, local leaders, big or small, established their own *raj*, now that the British officers had vanished and the British *raj* was believed to have come to an end. This has been regarded by many writers as "a vast upsurge of the people", and by not a few as 'war of Indian independence'. One of these writers has described as follows the situation at Saharanpur, with a population of about forty thousand, after the sepoys had joined the Gujars and Ranghars, who had commenced their depredations even before the sepoys mutinied. "All throughout this period the turbulent elements robbed the bankers and money-lenders, extorted blackmail from them and sacked the police stations and tahsils. Umrao Singh, the headman of the village of Manakpur in Mangalaur tahsil declared himself a raja, levied money, though he failed in the long run. The tahsil and the thana of Nakur was completely gutted. The magistrate, Robertson, proceeded to punish the refractory villages on 20 June, but the country around rose up to effect the release of the prisoners. It was a war of the villagers—parties with the beat of *dhols* assembled on 22 June, and showed a grit and determination in the fight. Buddhakheri was a strong centre of Gujar disaffection where one Fatua proclaimed himself king of the Gujars[8]." This being the usual pattern of the 'popular upsurge' and 'war of independence', obviously these expressions have to be understood in a special sense.

The same story was repeated in other places. In Bulandshahr "mixed crowds of rebel forces, Gujars, villagers and townsmen took part in wanton destruction of civil and military establishments. Offices were gutted, records destroyed, and former proprietors ousted. Many other excesses were committed culminating in the temporary disappearance of the British rule by 29 May[9]."

A scrutiny of these accounts reveals several prominent elements in these early risings. The first was the notorious *goonda* elements of the locality who never miss any opportunity of troubles or disturbances to carry on their nefarious activities. In a way the sepoys encouraged these by opening the jails which became a regular feature of the mutiny. The ex-convicts and *goondas* were naturally joined by other elements of similar nature, and there are some grounds to suppose that most, if not the whole, of plunder and massacre was the work of these people who formed the scum of the population.

Next to the local *goonda* elements, we notice the activities of various marauding tribes, notorious for rapine, plunder and massacre which formed their principal occupation and the only means of livelihood. The above account of the Gujars and Ranghars at Saharanpur gives us a fair idea of the quick reaction of the mutiny upon these classes of peoples.

It was not long before other classes seized the opportunity to exploit the situation to their advantage. The village *Zamindars* and villagers took advantage of the general anarchy to obtain from *Mahajans* and *Baniyas* their books of business and bond-debts etc.

The prominent chiefs of various localities could not be expected to sit idle. They took advantage of the general turmoil to regain what they had lost, or to gain new territories and privileges, and not unoften, also to settle old scores with enemies. It would also appear that, at least at the beginning, the disturbances were less directed against Government than

against particular people and classes. A contemporary writer has given a very vivid description of the state of anarchy and confusion that prevailed "in the open country... from Delhi over the whole of the cis-Sutlej States". After referring to the plundering raids and other atrocities perpetrated by the Gujars and other predatory tribes impartially on all classes of people—Europeans and Indians, civil or military—he refers to the activities of the normally peaceful folk as follows:—"Villagers fought with one another about boundary questions decided half a century ago. Hundreds of heads of cattle changed hands ; murders and robberies were committed unpunished in the open day[10]".

Having given a general account, we may now proceed to describe briefly the main incidents of the revolt of the people in some important centres.

2. THE NORTH-WESTERN PROVINCES

The chief centre of revolt was Bareilly where the sepoys suddenly and unexpectedly rose on 31 May, and the British officers fled for their lives. According to the account of a Bengali gentleman,[11] the Cavalry Regiment was loyal, and gallopped to the help of the British officers, but the latter mistook them as pursuers, and rode forward as best they could without looking back to see the friendly signal. The Cavalry Regiment thereupon joined the mutineers.

Khan Bahadur Khan, to whom reference has been made above,[11a] was the natural leader of the Rohillas. As the head of the ruling family, Khan Bahādur Khan got a monthly stipend of one hundred rupees from the British Government, and he also enjoyed pension as a judicial officer in the British service.

He was friendly to the British, and on May 30, warned the Commissioner of the impending mutiny. The latter writes in his report: 'He shook hands with me and his last words were significant, *apne jan buchao* or look out for your life'[12]. Yet when the successful mutiny of the troops heralded the

end of the British rule, Khan Bahadur Khan assumed the administration as viceroy on behalf of the Emperor of Delhi. He was either carried away by the tide of rebellion or was unwilling to see another elevated to the position which, he thought, was his due as the legitimate heir of the last independent ruler of Rohilkhand.

He began his reign by ordering the execution of all the English, and issuing a long proclamation enunciating the causes and general principles of the revolution, to which reference will be made later. He appointed district officers of different grades, began to collect revenue, and set up a regular system of administration broadbased on the sympathy and support of the Hindus and Muslims. He sent *nazar* and presents to the Emperor at Delhi and received the firman of investiture as Viceroy. He appointed Hindus to important posts, and many chiefs, both Hindu and Muslim, acknowledged him as Lord. But the communal jealousy was too deep to be uprooted, and ruined the chances of a good administration. Sobha Ram, the head of the Revenue Department, was not liked by the Muslims, and one day, during his absence, a Muslim crowd forcibly entered into his house on the plea of searching for hidden Englishmen and plundered it. Mir Alam Khan, a relative of Khan Bahadur Khan, attacked the house of a respectable Hindu, named Baldeo Gir Gosain, and threatened him and his wife with violence. Gosain killed him in self-defence. But though Gosain was tried for this murder and acquitted, he was killed by Mir Alam's brother who got off scotfree. Hindu officers were despoiled. Businessmen were heavily taxed and payment was enforced by severe measures. Not only some of them but even high officials of the newly established Government were secretly helping the British[13]. In Budaon Thakur Harlal of Bakshiena collected his clan and declared himself independent of Delhi and his Nazim, Khan Bahadur[14].

We possess a long narrative of the mutiny at Bareilly written by Durgadas Bandopadhyaya, a Bengali gentleman

in the employ of the British army. He was present there and had ample opportunities of seeing things for himself and securing information from reliable sources. Here we find almost an exact replica of the tales of woe and misery suffered by the people at the hands of the sepoys as witnessed at Delhi by Munshi Jiwanlal and Main-ud-din. Khan Bahadur Khan, the nominal ruler of Bareilly, was in a helpless condition like Bahadur Shah, and Bakht Khan wielded the real power. There was no discipline among the sepoys, who were engaged in indiscriminately looting the shops and plundering the rich and poor alike. As in Delhi, many sepoys amassed a rich booty and returned home. Most cruel tortures were applied to extort money from the people. The Hindus and Muslims were forced to reveal their hidden treasure by the threat of being forced to take, respectively, the flesh of cows and pigs. Men were made to sit on boiling cauldrons with the same object. Plunder, theft, robbery and rape were the order of the day. A circumstantial narrative of the indignities suffered by a rich woman of the town, named Panna, in the hands of the sepoys, makes most painful reading. The demon of communalism also raised its head. The Muslims spat over the Hindus and openly defiled their houses by sprinkling them with cow's blood and placing cow's bones within the compounds. Concrete instances are given where Hindu sepoys came into clash with the Muslim hooligans engaged in defiling Hindu houses, and a communal riot ensued. The Hindus, oppressed by the Muslims, were depressed at the success of the mutiny, and daily offered prayers to God for the return of the English. Even many Muslims wanted the English to return. Large numbers of persons were recruited as mercenaries and joined the mutineers on payment of Rs. 5, 6, or 7 per month. The mutineers were very hard on the Bengali residents of Bareilly. Many of them were whipped, and seven were condemned to death, merely on suspicion and without any regular charge being framed against them[15].

Another important centre of revolt was Farrukhabad. The cantonment at Fategarh was about six miles from this place. The sepoys of the 10th N. I. mutinied on June 18 and formally placed the Nawab of Furrukhabad on the *musnud* (throne) under a royal salute, and tendered their allegiance to him. They had seized the treasure, but when the new Government demanded it they resolutely refused to surrender a rupee. Even when the mutinous sepoys of 41st N. I. from the neighbouring district of Sitapur asked for a share of it, they refused to divide the spoil. Many sepoys of the 10th N.I. went home with their share of the loot and then there ensued a fight between the two groups—the remnant of the 10th and 41st N. I.—in which several sepoys on both sides were killed. At last, the survivors joined together in attacking the fort which fell, and many British were killed, or drowned in course of their flight. The Nawab, Tuffuzzal Husain Khan, then set up an administration with the help of the old native officials. He made an attempt to conciliate the Hindus who formed the majority of the Sitapur regiment, but communal riots broke out here and there.[16]

It is interesting to note that not only local chiefs but even Government officials sometimes made themselves masters of the territory evacuated by the British. The most notable instance is that of Fatehpur. It was not a military station, but had about sixty or seventy sepoys as treasury-guards. The civil population, assisted by escaped jail birds and roving bands of sepoys, rose in rebellion, released the local prisoners, plundered the treasury, and burnt a number of Government offices. All the European officers left except Mr. Tucker, the Judge, who held out till he was killed. After the British were thus liquidated, Hikmatulla, a Deputy Magistrate, began to rule the district in the name of Nana.[17]

The outbreak at Bijnor possesses some features of special interest. It was not a military station and offers an undiluted picture of the revolt of the civil population. On May 19, the news of Mirat let loose not only all the lawless elements

but even more respectable classes. The plunder of *tahsils,* burning, and other usual excesses were committed by the Gujars, Banjars, Mewatis, Jats, Chauhans, and escaped prisoners over an extensive area. Even more respectable classes joined in the fray, the lead being taken by Mahmud Khan, Nawab of Nazibabad, who arrived at the place with a band of sturdy Pathans to take possession of the rich treasures which were kept at the station. The Magistrate, however, unable to save the money in any other way, threw it into a well, the mouth of which could be defended from the roof of the treasury building. The Nawab had brought a number of empty carts to carry away the money, but was thwarted by the Hindu *Zamindars* and sepoys, on leave, who came to the aid of the Magistrate. But the revolt at Bareilly cut off Bijnor from all communications with the outside British authorities, and naturally encouraged the Nawab. The Magistrate, therefore, through the good offices of a loyal Government servant, who afterwards became famous as Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, entered into an agreement with the Nawab by which the latter was placed in charge of the district for a period of ten days, during which, it was expected, Delhi would fall and the Magistrate would be able to return in full force. But as Delhi did not fall, and the Magistrate did not return, the Nawab proclaimed himself ruler of the district under the King of Delhi. He had already received the money in the treasury under the agreement and now fished up the remainder of the money from the well. After setting himself firmly in his authority, the Nawab began to oppress the Hindu chiefs. These, however, combined and drove him from Bijnor. Then followed a bitter and prolonged fight between the Hindus and the Muslims in which the ultimate victory rested with the latter. This was celebrated by a wanton massacre of unoffending Hindus. But soon a dispute arose between the Muslim leaders themselves, and the power was shared by three of them. They held it till April, 1858. During this period freebooters from neighbouring districts

joined the party, and burned and plundered the neighbouring localities, including the two sacred sites of the Hindus, viz., Haridvar and Kanakhal.[18]

Bareilly, Farrukhabad, and Bijnor furnish typical pictures of the numerous tiny kingdoms that were established all over Rohilkhand as a result of the withdrawal of the British. Though some of them nominally acknowledged the authority of Delhi, they were all independent for all practical purposes. They rose and fell like meteor, and before a year was over, vanished, all of them, leaving behind nothing but sad memories of rapine and plunder, occasionally enlivened by the stories of heroic courage shown by some of the leaders in their life-and-death struggle against the British force.

In some places, as in Moradabad, these tiny kingdoms, left by the British as parting gifts, proved a veritable apple of discord. Gulzarali, a Sayyid of ruined fortune, proclaimed himself Viceroy of the King of Delhi at Amroha, 21 miles from the city of Moradabad where the sepoys mutinied on 3 June. The 29th Regiment proclaimed Mujoo Khan governor of Moradabad, while the artillery chose Asadali Khan. Another candidate was Abdul Ali Khan, the uncle of Nawab Yusuf Ali Khan of Rampur, who came down to Moradabad early in June and received salute and held *darbars.* As soon as he returned to Rampur, a proclamation was issued on 17 June in favour of Mujoo Khan. Some of the Muslim nobles joined his government, and a *jihad* was proclaimed against the English. But the Nawab of Rampur was loyal to the British and really held the district for them in spite of the revolt of a number of Muslim leaders. The communal bitterness, as usual, marked the outbreak.[19]

Shahjahanpur, another centre of popular rising, tells the same tale. On 31 May, the mutinous sepoys, excited by Surfuraz Ali, a Maulavi of Gorakhpur, killed a number of Europeans, two of them at the church. The survivors found a temporary refuge with the *Zamindar* of Pawain, but while proceeding towards Aurangabad, were cruelly massacred.

While the Maulavis and Ghazis were dominating the city, "the villagers broke out into rebellion; tahsils were plundered, records were destroyed and police stations sacked. Valuable materials connected with the sugar refinery and rum factory of Messrs. Carew and Co. were gutted by the people of the neighbouring villages, nearly twenty in number. On June 1, a procession proclaiming the overthrow of the British rule was led by Hamid Hasan Khan and Nizamali Khan. The rule of the Rohillas under Khan Bahadur Khan was announced with Qadirali Khan and Ghulam Hussain Khan as local chiefs. But the mutual jealousies of the Mahomedan rulers and the resistance to their exactions by the Rajput chiefs who were killed in large numbers by Mardanali Khan in a fierce encounter, led to an indifferent situation. No less depressing was the hostile attitude of Ghulam Kadir Khan who replaced Qadirali Khan as Nazim and appointed his own men as officers". Ahmad Yar Khan, a tahsildar, called in the aid of Ismail Khan of Bareilly to crush the Rajputs.[20]

The revolutionary outbreaks of civil population took place over such an extensive area in the region now known as Uttar Pradesh, that it is not possible to refer, even briefly to all the affected localities. Nevertheless, as the 'popular upsurge' has been constructed as a struggle for national independence it is necessary to form an accurate view of its nature. This can best be done by referring to the incidents that took place in a few selected localities. The following summary is based upon an official publication entitled "*Narratives of Events Attending the Outbreak of Disturbances*".[21] It was compiled by the various District Officers and the Divisional Commissioners in the North-Western Provinces in obedience to the instructions contained in the General Order No. 212 of 30 April, 1858, and contains almost a day to day account of the incidents that happened under the very eyes of the officials concerned, or of which they got information from men who witnessed them. Whatever we might think of the views and comments of these officers, the events recorded by

them may be regarded as fairly authentic. The resemblance between the incidents recorded by different officials in different localities is a strong evidence in support of their general accuracy. Besides, the general picture that emerges out of these accounts is fully corroborated by the accounts of contemporary Indians to which reference has been made above. In any case, it is not possible to get a more authentic detailed account of the various local outbreaks. Most of the passages in the following summary are verbatim quotations of these reports, though, here and there, they have been condensed without making any substantial or material change. Many details have necessarily been omitted. It is interesting to note that even those writers, who represent the outbreak of 1857 as a national war of independence, have freely drawn upon these accounts, at least whenever they suited their purpose. A few quotations will be made from the writings of one of them, Dr. S. B. Chaudhuri, in order to show that there is no room for doubt about the main facts on which one's judgment about the nature of the revolt of 1857-8 has to be based.

A. BUDAUN[22]

According to the *Narrative* inhabitants of some villages commenced plundering travellers, while those of others plundered the boats laden with grain belonging to 'Beoparees' (corn-dealers), which were moored on the *ghats* of the Gangā.

The Aheers of Nundpoor, Lawur and others banded together and murdered Heera Singh and Kulloo Singh, *Zamindars* of Putheria ; they wounded Gopal Singh, the brother of the above, and plundered their property. The *Narrative* contains many gruesome details on the basis of which Dr. S. B. Chaudhuri describes the progress of popular agitation at Budaun in the following words:

"Though internal dissensions between the different communities weakened the basis of the movement, the popular fury was there to feed sedition. Blackmail was freely levied

from all the baniyas and mahajans, and valuable indigo factories were gutted and even the iron boilers were melted down for shot and records were burnt extensively. While the masses had done everything to efface all traces of British rule, the talukdars took the opportunity of expelling the auction purchasers, and resumed possession of their hereditary states".[23] Many Government servants, mostly Hindus, took service under the rebels and more than fifty chiefs carried on rapine and violence all over the district.

B. ALIGARH[24]

'Before the middle of June, the Chohans of the Pergunnah, intent on revenge, called in the Jats to their help, attacked Khyr, plundered and destroyed nearly all the government buildings, as well as the houses of *bunyahs* and *mahajans*. In July a regular government was set up by the rebels under Nusseemoollah.

'The old Rajpoot and Jat feuds raged strongly in the western parts of this district, and towards Saidabad, in the Muttra district, and was only stopped by the fall of Delhi. The feeling of animosity between Hindoos and Mahomedans was also generally bitter in the towns of this district, especially after the excesses of Nusseemoollah.

'Of the European-owned indigo factories, a very large one was plundered and burnt by the villagers, i.e., Mr. Nichterlein's, and three others were plundered by mutineer troops; the other considerable ones were saved by the *zemindars*. The records of the Sudder cutcherry, and those of four of eight tehseels, were destroyed; of these one act of destruction only was purely the work of villagers, i.e. the case of Khyr. In the other cases, the populace took a share after order had been first upset, or plunder commenced by mutineer troops. As elsewhere, the people plundered one another freely. Two towns of importance were plundered; Khyr to the amount of one lac of rupees, and Hurdooah Gunge, four lacs; these estimates are moderate. Coel was also a great deal plundered

by Mewatees, etc. of the town, by passing rebel troops, by Nuseemoollah during his 11 days' reign, and by the British troops. The only other case of marked rebellion among men of consideration is that of Mungal Singh and Mahtab Singh, Rajpoot *zemindars* of Akrabad, who after the plunder of Akrabad *tehseel* treasury by sepoys, permitted the destruction of the records by their own people, refused all aid to the tehseeldar, and generally lived a life of open rebellion'. The official account continues: "Though aid in the struggle has been in many instances rendered us by the natives, especially by the Hindoos, after they had received a fore-taste of a Mahomedan government, still their general attitude must be characterised as apathetic. The large number of persons who had so much to gain from the overthrow of our government were content to annex their lost estates and await the result of the struggle......".

C. MATHURA[25]

'The disturbances were chiefly attacks on *buniahs* and ejectment of new *zemindars* by the old...The great protection of the city consisted in the *seths* Radha Kishen and Gobind Das, who raised a large body of men at their own expenses and by their influence kept the other inhabitants quiet. They also lent Captain Nixon two brass guns...The disturbances in the district had been increasing both in number and enormity. Kuer Dildar Ally Khan, a large *zemindar* in Pergunnah Maot, was murdered by his villagers. On the 23rd May, Omrow Bahadoor, a relative of his who had estates in Pergunnah Nohjheel had been besieged in his house, but on the approach of the British force, the villagers had retired and he made his escape. Several other murders and other outrages were committed. The news of the mutiny had spread with a great rapidity and the whole country had risen almost instantaneously. (The British officials) were fired from several villages and had several narrow escapes. On reaching Muttra Mr. Burlton put the treasures on carts and gave the word to

march. The Subahdar said "where" ? "To Agra, of course," Mr. Burlton replied, on which a shout arose "no, to Delhi, to Delhi". Mr. Burlton exclaimed "you traitors" and he was shot dead by a sepoy. The sepoys then set fire to the office ; the flames were the first notice the Europeans in the station had of the Mutiny ; they instantly left and all succeeded in making their escape to Agra ; the office being well on fire, the sepoys marched off with the treasure ; they sent a detachment to release the prisoners in jail. The jail guard at once joined them ; they then marched on towards Delhi. They burnt two bungalows besides the office, but did no other damage ; they, however, burnt all the government buildings on the road, customs *chowkies* and bungalows, police *chowkies*, etc. The *zemindars* of all the villages along the road joined and assisted them'.

'As the news spread, the country arose ; the whole district was in anarchy. The police and revenue establishments were everywhere ejected, or if permitted to remain, allowed to remain on mere sufferance ; the *buniahs* were plundered, new proprietors ejected and murdered, and the king of Delhi proclaimed...The villagers fought across the river.' "The outrage committed by the insurgents had been very great ; the town of Rayah had been completely plundered ; the very houses dug to pieces in search of treasure. The atrocities committed on some of the *buniahs*' wives will not bear repetition. The confusion and anarchy of the country exceeded belief ; in a circle of a few miles, above five or six *zemindars* had declared themselves independent, assumed the title of *rajah* and proclaimed the king of Delhi. In one instance a single village split into two factions, one-half proclaimed a rajah, the other half the *zemindars* ; the impression that the English rule had ceased was universal".

D. AGRA[26]

The retreat of the British force to the Fort was signalised by the burning of buildings. The rebel troops followed *it*

former owners. Anarchy prevailed and plunder on all sides..."

E. BANDÂ[27]

The insurrection commenced in June before which no actual outbreak or even a dacoitee had taken place in the Banda district. The released convicts from Allahabad and Kanpur, however, soon spread over the country and found the Banda people only too ready to join them. 'The *Tehseelee* of Mow was first attacked and plundered by the *zemindars* of Mow and the neighbouring villages, and the records torn up and distributed to the winds, in order, as they said, that no record of their liabilities might remain to the government. The *Tehseelee* and *Thannah* establishments did their best; but were overwhelmed by thousands, and compelled to seek safety in flight. The loss of other *Tehseelees* soon followed in a like manner. The whole district went to the bad in less than a week. The town and bazar of Rajapoor was saved from plunder by the merchants themselves who assembled a large force and repelled the repeated attacks of the surrounding villages...

'On the same night that the British officers left Banda, all the bungalows in Cantonments were plundered and burnt to the ground and Nawab Ali Bahadoor proclaimed his own rule; and through the Government police made arrangements, which saved the town from being plundered. He gave out that the Collector and Magistrate had entrusted the district to his care and desired all Government servants to remain at their posts......The Adjygurh (Ajaigarh?) chiefs, sent by their *ranee* to the assistance of the British, joined in releasing the prisoners. Many of the leading *bunyas* of the town were also present on this occasion and sweetmeats were distributed by them to the mutineers. The sepoys then proclaimed their own Raj in opposition to that of Nawab Ali Bahadur issued on the previous night at which they were much incensed. The Nawab, however, managed to appease their wrath by giving

them a great dinner of sweetmeats and by acknowledging their authority. They then called the Amlahs and told them they would be maintained in their several appointments; and Mahomed Sidar Khan, the Deputy Collector, was appointed by the sepoys 'Nazim of Banda' with full powers of life and death. The slaughter of cows and bullocks was then forbidden throughout the town. Mr. Cockerell, the Joint Magistrate and a number of East Indians were murdered.'

"In the pergunnahs the news spread like wildfire, and the villagers rose in every direction and plundered and murdered each other promiscuously. Old enmities and the long-smothered wish for revenge were forthwith satisfied. Auction purchasers and decreeholders were ousted, travellers and merchandize plundered, and the servants of Government compelled to fly for their lives; and, in all instances government buildings and property of every description were plundered and destroyed. Everyman's hand was against his neighbour, and the natives revelled in all the license and madness of unchecked anarchy and rebellion in a manner such as only Asiatics can revel in those pleasures. *Tulwars* and matchlocks were scarce in Bundelcund; but armed with spears and scythes, and ironbound lathies and temporary axes formed by chopping knives fastened on sticks, they imagined themselves to be warriors, chose their own Kings, and defied all comers. Never was revolution more rapid, never more complete"......The sepoys left on the 19th June with their plundered treasures (2 lakhs), guns and ammunition. Pending a reference to Nana about the claims of two rivals—the Nawab and the chieftain of Adjygurh—for the throne of Banda, the former was allowed to take charge of the country. The dispute led to a fight between the two about the middle of August, and again in October. But Nawab Ali Bahadur was not the only ruler of the district. At Kirwi, in the western part, Narayan Rao and Madho Rao declared themselves as Peshwas, both being second to bear these names in that illustrious line. Thus, in the words of a modern

historian, who fully relied on the account given above, in Banda, "the revolutionary flame was in full blaze", and "the popular character of the rebellion" was manifested in the "destruction of the church and the desecration of the Christian burial ground."[28]

F. HAMIRPUR[29]

"After the murder of the Europeans, including the Magistrate, anarchy was the order of the day; the mob and sepoys rushed up to the town, plundered everyone they could lay their hands on; old scores were wiped out in blood, and the Christian preacher, Jeremiah, with his whole family were slaughtered unresisting.

"The Bengalee Baboos as writing English were next attacked, and though they begged their lives, lost everything they possessed......There were three boats of unarmed sepoys of the 44th and 67th Regiments, those I believe who were disarmed at Agra, passing by on the 18th June; the guns were turned on them and opened, many were killed, the boats taken and the goods found in them made over to men of the auxiliary chiefs, the sepoys being left to get on their way as best they could. The sepoys and the auxiliaries now fell out about the money in the treasury amounting to a lakh and a half; on July 1, the Peshwa's rule was proclaimed. Once more anarchy prevailed in Hamirpur, the Romeree *Zemindars* levying blackmail on whom they pleased, and committing all kinds of violence; these men with the exception of Thoke Teroze were the leaders in everything bad, and were well backed up by those of Serowlee Buzoorg and Khoord. The Humeerpore *Zemindars* seem to have behaved decidedly well, but are so weak and poor as to have been able to do little.

"The great feature in the rebellion here has been the universal ousting of all bankers, *baniyas*, Marwarees, etc., from landed property in the district, by whatever means they acquired it, whether at auction, by private sale or otherwise, and also that the larger communities have profited immensely

by the time of anarchy, while many of the smaller ones have been ruined and dispersed; those who were strong enough to plunder with impunity did so, the others were the victims. This, however, must have been equally the case all over the country; but it is strange that in no instance do the classes so favoured by our rule, the bankers and other traders, appear to have been able to keep their own in the struggle..."

G. JHANSI

Jhansi presented a similar scene of anarchy and confusion. The Rani, who is supposed to have led the war of independence, thus describes the condition of the District in a letter to the Commissioner of the Saugor Division:

"The Urzee of the Tahsildars and thanadars of Puchare dated 11th June 1857 states that the Jagirdar of Khuneeadhana of Elaka Jhansee has attacked the district with a hundred matchlockmen and taken possession of the fort of Ahar and the Thakoors of Kuphar etc. have taken forcible possession of the fort Mehraunee and turned away the police sephaees from there, and the same things are going on in other places. No policeman can be got to take service. If all the Gurhees are in this manner taken possession of by these people, the district will be ruined; if assistance be rendered some arrangements can be made, otherwise everything must go to ruin.

"The Urzee of the Thanadar of Rahpoor Dhala dated 11th June states that it appears that Thakoors of Kyrwa have dismissed the police from the chaukee at the post and the Pawars are marching about in bands. The Thakoors of Kyrwa have got together some 200 or 150 men with evil designs towards the inhabitants."

"It has been rumoured that the Thakoor of Chargaon has taken possession of the place and is collecting the revenue of the Parganah and ruining the inhabitants."

The Rani sums up the position by saying that "in all the *elaqas* (i.e. subdivisions) subordinate to Jhansi the chiefs have

taken possession of the Gurhees, while others are plundering the country", and that "it is quite beyond her power to make any arrangement for the safety of the district".[30]

H. OTHER AREAS

There were outbreaks in Jubbulpore District where 179 rebel leaders appeared in arms.[31] It is unnecessary to describe at length the activities of such local chiefs who established their ephemeral authority over small areas. Some of them assumed royal titles. For example, the fort of Rahatgarh, 24 miles from Sagar, was seized by Fazil Muhammad who assumed the title of Prince of Mandasor.[32] Faizuddin Muktear proclaimed Soal Singh as the Raja of Ajaigarh.[33] Many of them are definitely known to have old scores to pay against the British. The Raja of Banpur, the most prominent of them, who later fought hard against the British, "had many grievances to complain of", and cherished the hope of gaining the entire kingdom of Chanderi, the ancient possession of his ancestors, on the expected fall of the British rule".[34] He at first played a double game, negotiating for terms and territories, but eventually rebelled and seized Chanderi. Many other chiefs rose in revolt because they "had lost their *obari* rights in several of their villages", or their estates "had been in whole or in part resumed by the Government".[35] The Rani of Jaitpur, a State annexed by Dalhousie on the Doctrine of Lapse, set herself up as a ruler at Jaitpur, but was driven away by the Chirkaree troops.[36] The Rani of Ramgarh took up arms to get rid of the Court of Wards which managed the State[37]

I. GENERAL REVIEW

Although many chiefs in Bundelkhand, Sagar and Narmada territories sooner or later threw in their lot with the rebels, one can hardly accept the statement of Dr. S. B. Chaudhuri that "by the end of August, all places to the north of the Narmada with the exception of the Sadar stations

were in flames".[38] Jalaun and Charkhari were unaffected, and the Raja of Panna continued to be the most faithful ally of the British. The same was the case with the ruler of Orchha and Datia, who attacked the Rani of Jhansi and won the support of the British by representing her as a rebel. The Raja of Rewa helped the British with troops, and the whole Baghelkhand remained quiet.

It is equally untrue to say that the "rebellion culminated in the complete subversion of the British power".[39] It would be more appropriate to say that the subversion of the British power by the mutiny of the sepoys culminated in the rebellion of the people as they thought that "the British raj was over." This, again, is true only in a general way of Rohilkhand and the adjoining area immediately lying to the south of the Yamuna.

So far as Rohilkhand is concerned, the British authority almost disappeared for nearly a year. The whole country presented a scene of plunder and devastation, in which almost everybody's hand was against his neighbour. Khan Bahadur Khan of Bareilly and many other chiefs exercised independent royal authority, fondly believing that the British rule had gone for ever and the Muslim power was going to be revived in all its glory. Nevertheless, wherever there was a vestige of British authority left, large sections of people submitted to it. Referring to Muzaffarnagar where the civil population broke into revolt on May 14, before there was a similar revolt elsewhere, the Magistrate reports: "By the end of August, I collected Rs. 2,95,000 (as revenue) without the sacrifice of a single life (employed in collecting revenue). Later, disturbances occurred in various parts of the district, but the authority was maintained".[40]

Dr. Chaudhuri seems to convey the impression that the region north of the Narmada was in flames kindled by the torch of freedom. But what are the actual facts ? We have got a fairly good picture of the state of this region in those days, based on authentic testimony. It portrays Indian chiefs

fighting against one another, some of them befriending the English for securing the help against rival chiefs, others helping the British at first, then changing, or forced to change, their attitude by the unjust suspicion of the latter, brought out in no small measure by the machinations of their Indian enemies ; the petty local chiefs only busy with establishing their own authority and enriching themselves by all unscrupulous means ; plunder and murder going on all sides. This hardly fits in with the romantic picture of Jhansi as the centre of a national war of independence. But such was, in brief, the condition of the whole of North-Western Provinces.

It is a fitting occasion to pause and reflect on the nature of this short spell of independence for which no war had to be waged against the English, and no blood was shed, except that of European and Indian victims of the mutinous sepoys and infuriated populace. In order to understand the nature of the revolt in N. W. P. we must take note of the fact that the class that perhaps contributed most to the wide-spread character of the rebellion was that connected with land. The agrarian system adopted by the British in the Ceded Provinces, as mentioned above, had entirely changed the character of land tenure. In particular, the heavy assessments of revenue, combined with two innovations introduced in 1833, namely, a complete cadastral survey and large-scale resumption of rent-free grants of lands, proved disastrous to the people.

The result was that the cultivators, already in debt on account of over-assessment prior to 1833, were forced to borrow more money, at heavy rate of interest, from traders, merchants and money-lending classes, who sought to invest their spare cash in land which came to be regarded as a secure and stable form of property. By the new legislation of 1848 it became quite easy for the money-lenders to get decrees in courts and auction the property for non-payment of loans. As a consequence, these wealthy classes got the

strengthened by the participation in it of the noted Gujar Chiefs,...an outlaw, the Delhi princes and Sirdar Khan."[41]

Dr. Chaudhuri's comment on the general character of the revolt is still more explicit: "The revolt in Rohilkhand was mostly confined to the muslim community who were inflamed by fanaticism to an intense hatred of the English. They raised the green flag, shouted for the revival of the Islamic State and despoiled the hindu bankers and merchants. *But these features did not warp the popular character of the rising*".[42]

It seems to be the view of Dr. Chaudhuri that the hatred of the English is the only factor that counts in a popular national movement, even though the resulting activity was wanton plunder and destruction by the rowdy elements who were hitherto kept in restraint by the English authority and therefore very naturally hated it. The popular character, it seems, is not lost even though the Hindus fight against Muslims, one faction fights against another, and every body's hand is against his neighbours. Even Dr. Chaudhuri's detailed account does not show that the people, while thus engaged, bestowed a moment's thought upon devising measures to maintain the independence they had so miraculously won without any effort on their part, or that any class or group of persons looked upon this independence in any other light than as a means to gain their personal ends. It is therefore difficult to hold that the revolts in N. W. P. deserve the name of popular rising or popular upsurge, as part of a national movement for independence. The spontaneity of the popular risings, on which Dr. Chaudhuri lays stress, does not necessarily indicate prolonged and eager expectancy to free the motherland or drive away the English, but may be easily accounted for by the long-standing grievances, mentioned above, of the cultivating class which constituted 90 per cent. of the people, and the godsent opportunity to loot, kill, and burn with impunity, which no Gujar, Banjar, escaped convicts or people of that sort are ever

known to have missed. Nor does history record any instance where these classes of people hesitated or waited for a moment when such an opportunity presented itself. Dr. Chaudhuri claims that even apart from these marauding elements there was 'tension among the landed chiefs as well as the people', and the mutiny of sepoys acted like a spark on an ignited substance. This tension was due to various types of discontent, mentioned above, causing disaffection and hatred against the British, but the ignition did not kindle the torch of patriotism and a burning desire for freedom. The so-called popular upsurge, to start with, was really a scramble for power and plunder, and even the popular cry of 'drive away the English' lost its force and fervour after the first orgy of riots was over. This alone can explain how Syed Ahmad, a Government official, could hold Bijnor for some time on behalf of the British, without any military force, and the District of Moradabad was similarly held by the loyal Nawab of Rampur. Moradabad, in any case, had tasted the bitter cup of freedom. The Hindus, disaffected by the communal policy of the Government, welcomed the return of the British forces. On April 21, Firuz Shah, a prince of the royal House of Delhi, who had cast in his lot with the Rohilkhand rebels, marched upon Moradabad and demanded money and supplies. But the towns-people refused, and Firuz Shah, after making a vain attempt to subdue them, was forced to beat an inglorious retreat.[43]

Another point of interest in the so-called popular upsurge in Rohilkhand is the equal readiness of the people to fight for or against either Khan Bahadur Khan or the British, so long as they were paid for the work. Much is made of the fact that Khan Bahadur Khan had raised an army of forty thousand troops. But as Durgadas Bandyopadhyaya, who was present in Bareilly at the time, observes, these recruits, mostly poor men, were attracted by payment alone; the common folk had no enthusiasm for any party or cause, and thousands joined the British army for exactly the same reason.[44]

It is true that many landlords joined the revolt, but many also remained loyal and faithful to the British till the last. As regards the common people the contemporary British writers themselves admit that a large section of them in N. W. P. showed friendly feelings to the British. As an evidence thereof it is pointed out that otherwise supplies could not be obtained, and small groups of Englishmen could not move through Rohilkhand without any escort and hold important posts "amidst the swarms of mutineers passing up the Grand Trunk Road to Delhi".[45] If there are instances where the Englishmen were cruelly butchered, there are perhaps more numerous examples where English fugitives—men, women, and children—owed their lives to the kindness and sympathy of the Indians, both chiefs and common people. All this does not necessarily mean that these were loyal to the British; they might have been passive or indifferent, even though disaffected towards the British. But the existence of a large element of such people certainly takes away from the universal character of the 'popular rising' which has been claimed by some writers.

3. AWADH (AVADH)

Reference has been made above[46] to the mutiny of the sepoys at Lakhnau on May 3, which was easily suppressed. The news of Mirat and Delhi reached there on May 14 and 15. On the night of May 30, there was another rising in course of which the Brigadier was shot and the officers' bungalows were burnt. But nearly five to six hundred men of the three native regiments remained loyal, and next morning Sir Henry Lawrence, who had been given plenary power in Awadh, had no difficulty in dispersing the mutineers who all fled after a few discharges from his guns and marched to Delhi. The same afternoon (May 31) about five or six thousand Muslims raised the standard of the Prophet and attempted a rising of the civil population, but the police put them down.

During the month of May the province of Awadh had remained comparatively quiet and, unlike Rohilkhand, British administration was regularly carried on throughout the Province. But after the mutiny at Lakhnau on May 30/31 mutiny became general throughout the Province. This was evidently due, partly to the example of Lakhnau, and partly to the constant stream of mutineers pouring into Awadh from outside. But whatever may be the cause, "every detachment without exception threw off control". "In every instance the mutiny of a regiment was followed by the loss of the district to which it belonged." In the course of ten or eleven days, English administration in Awadh had vanished like a dream, and not a single representative of the British Government was to be found at any of the stations in Awadh. It is, however, a singular fact that the common people as well as the Talukdars, with a few exceptions, treated the fugitive Europeans with genuine sympathy and kindness.[47]

The political vacuum thus created led to a situation not much dissimilar to what took place in Rohilkhand. But there were some special features. As stated above,[48] the Talukdars rose as a class to resume by force the lands that once belonged to them but had been sold by auction, and their old tenants rallied round them. All other classes of people also joined in the fray for reasons stated above.[49]

The rebellion in Awadh had another advantage over that in Rohilkhand. It had a rallying point in the Nawab family which was dispossessed of its domains only a year back. The last Nawab was practically a prisoner in Calcutta, but his cause was upheld by his queen, Begam Hazrat Mahal. Her minor son, Birjis Quadr, was selected as Nawab on 7 July and his coronation in Lakhnau was accompanied by booming of guns. A regular administration was set up with Sharf-ud-Daulah as Prime Minister and the important offices were judiciously distributed among the Hindus and Muslims. The chief authority was however wielded by Begam Hazrat Mahal.

It should not be supposed, however, that the whole of Awadh rallied round the authority of the Begam. As in Rohilkhand, so in Awadh, a number of local chiefs set up tiny independent kingdoms, some of which were contested by more than one rival claimant. Almost the whole of Awadh and bordering regions were parcelled out among the Talukdars and other chiefs, many of whom possessed one or more well-fortified strongholds and a large number of troops. Among these may be mentioned Muhammad Hasan of Gorakhpur, Mehndi Hasan of Sultanpur, Beni Madho Baksh of Sankarpur, Narpat Singh of Ruya, Udit Narayan and Madhu Pershad of Birpur, Devi Bux Singh and the three Singh Zamindars of Dhurua.[50]

It is unnecessary to describe in detail the risings in different parts of Awadh which followed the pattern of Rohilkhand. For henceforth the chief interest of the rebellion in Awadh was centred round Lakhnau, the capital city of the late Nawabs, the British, and the rebel government of Birjis Quadr, as it was only in that city that the remnants of the representatives of the British Government were concentrated in the Residency building besieged by the mutineers. It is therefore necessary to trace the origin and history of the memorable siege of Lakhnau which, along with Delhi and Kanpur, formed the chief strongholds of the rebellion of 1857-8.

As mentioned above,[51] the mutiny of the sepoys at Lakhnau on May 30 and 31 set ablaze the whole of Awadh ; yet, strangely enough, the British authority in Lakhnau remained undisturbed and intact for some time. But Sir Henry Lawrence was fully alive to the impending danger. The first step he took was to set up two strongly fortified centres in the city, where all the forces would be concentrated. These were the Machchhi Bhavan, a large fortified palace situated on a natural eminence, and his own residence, known as the Residency. Later, he selected the Residency, on the bank of the Gumti river, as the place of

refuge for all Europeans. It consisted of a number of detached dwelling houses and other buildings, of which the Residency itself was the most conspicuous, the whole area being defended only by rude mud walls and trenches. He took measures to improve the defences and erected batteries along the line of entrenchment.

On June 29, 1857, a large body of rebel army was reported to be advancing towards Lakhnau. Lawrence started the next morning and met them at Chinhat, about ten miles to the north-east of the city. After an artillery duel, the mutineers, advancing with a steadiness that extorted the admiration of the British officers, were already threatening to outflank their handful of opponents, when the desertion of some of Lawrence's native gunners, and the flight of his native cavalry decided the fortune of the day. Lawrence gave order to retreat and "the retreat soon became a rout." The mutineers blocked the way to Lakhnau by occupying a bridge over a small rivulet. But a small squadron of British volunteers, with sabres flashing, hurled themselves upon the dense masses, and the sepoys broke and fled.[52]

The remnants of the British army reached the Residency, but the rebel force followed in their wake and invested it the same afternoon (June 30). Thus began that memorable siege which is perhaps the most amazing episode in the whole military history of the Mutiny. It is difficult to conceive of a more unequal contest. A small force of British soldiers and civilians and loyal sepoys, altogether numbering less than 1,700, burdened with a number of women and children, had to defend themselves in ordinary buildings with mud walls, protected by hastily improvised defences, against six thousand trained soldiers, who were soon reinforced by a constantly increasing number of Talukdars and their retainers, till their number reached one hundred thousand or perhaps even more.

The besieging sepoys at Lakhnau were inspired by the presence of the Begam of Awadh and Maulavi Ahmadulla who were the leading spirits in the resistance against the

British ; yet, to the astonishment alike of friends and foes, the tiny garrison held out for nearly three months till relief came on 25 September. At first the sepoys confined themselves to cannonading from a distance and a galling musketry fire from the neighbouring buildings, causing nearly fifteen to twenty deaths every day during the first week. One of the victims was Henry Lawrence himself, who was wounded by the bursting of a shell on July 2 and died two days later. Unable to create much effect upon the defenders by mere cannonading and musketry fires, the besiegers made a general assault on July 20 ; but although they reached the walls and some of them displayed great feats of courage, the attack was repulsed with heavy loss after four hours' desperate fighting. The general assault was repeated on August 10, August 18, and September 5, but always with the same result. The siege continued, and its further course will be related later.[53] It will suffice here to state that while the rebels could not capture the Residency at Lakhnau, several British expeditions also failed to dislodge them, and Lakhnau was not re-occupied by the British till the beginning of March, 1858.

The siege of Lakhnau is also a crucial test of the nature of the revolt in Awadh. The banner of the defunct kingdom of Awadh was unfurled again after a year, and if there were a genuine spirit or a real mass movement to fight for the King and the Country (even taking it in the narrow sense of Awadh rather than India), one would expect a ready response from the hundreds of chiefs who set up baronial principalities all over the Province. Lakhnau was the focal point of the fight for freedom and Begam Hazrat Mahal was a brave and resourceful leader, not unworthy of the cause. Nothing is more natural than that the chiefs of Awadh should rally round her flag and place their entire energy and resources at her disposal without a moment's hesitation. The general truth of this is admitted by all classes of writers, even though they hold different views about the nature of the outbreak. Thus Dr. S. B. Chaudhuri, to whom reference has been made

above, writes: "The rising at Lucknow was the central event of the rebellion in the mutinies. Both in dimension and character it embodied the revolutionary urges of the time". Proceeding further he says: "The operations at Lucknow took the form of a great war of liberation. It marked the climax of India's struggle against Britain *a guerre a la mort*".[54]

But what were the actual facts? The most crucial point in deciding this question is the behaviour of the chiefs and *Talukdars.* Although there are sharp differences of opinion on this issue,[55] it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Talukdars, with a few exceptions, did *not* join the revolt and rally round the flag of Begam Hazrat Mahal *at the beginning of the struggle.* The majority *at a later date* joined the rebellion only when they felt that the British Government was doomed and that they had no choice but to send their retainers to join in the siege of the Residency.

Dr. Chaudhuri has referred to Man Singh as one of the Talukdars taking a prominent part in the rebellion, and his being elected leader by the sepoys of Fyzabad on June 10 in preference to the Fyzabad Maulvi who was deposed from the leadership after two days.[56] Fortunately, a few positive facts are known about him on unimpeachable authority. Henry Lawrence had appealed to the Talukdars for support before the outbreak, and Raja Man Singh of Shahgunj, one of the most powerful and influential among them, had promised his loyal support to the British[57] and gave shelter to fugitive British women and children in his fort.[58] In July he addressed a circular letter to the other Talukdars urging them to support the British.[59] According to Gubbins, he sent his brother on a mission to Nana and at the same time carried on correspondence with the British.[60] Early in September he encamped with a large army near Lakhnau, but did not take any part in the siege. He was still negotiating with the British, and the besieged at Lakhnau did not know whether he was a friend or foe. Dr. Sen observes: "His presence,

therefore, was a source of anxiety as well as hope. If he chose to join the rebels the handful of Englishmen and Indians in the Residency would be simply crushed by overwhelming numbers. On the other hand, if he decided to help them the garrison could reasonably expect to hold their own and beat back the enemy".[61] But Man Singh did not definitely commit himself to either party though he professed allegiance to the English; he evidently desired to be on good terms with both the belligerents until, at least, he could be more sure about the possible result. After the failure of Havelock to relieve Lakhnau, Man Singh joined the mutineers, probably because he thought that theirs was the winning cause. In September and October, 1857, he was fighting against the English; in February, 1858, he remained entirely neutral; and in July he actively joined the British. Lieut. Majendie justly observes that "it is very difficult to specify the number of occasions when Mán Singh changed sides".[62]

Man Singh and his brother Ramdin Singh, who followed his example, may be regarded as typical of the Talukdar class as a whole, so far as their mentality, if not activity, is concerned.[63] There were a few exceptions, here and there, but there is no evidence that their number was large. Reference may be made to some of them in order to give the other side of the picture. Hanumant Singh of Dharupur gave shelter to the British fugitives from Salone in his fort. When Captain Barrow, Deputy Commissioner of Salone, on the eve of his departure a fortnight later, expressed a hope that the Raja would help the British in suppressing rebellion, he replied: "Sahib, your countrymen came into this country and drove out our king. You sent your officers round the districts to examine the titles to the estates. At one blow you took from me lands which from time immemorial had been in my family. I submitted. Suddenly misfortune fell upon you. The people of the land rose against you. You came to me whom you had despoiled. I have saved you.

But now,—now I march at the head of my retainers to Lakhnau to try and drive you from the country".[64] "The true-hearted Rajput, however, did not fight his new masters."[65]

Hanumant Singh was dispossessed of the greater part of his property and he had a sore grievance against the British. Rana Beni Madho of Sankarpore, who lost 119 out of 223 villages, also said that he fought against the English for his country, but it is not difficult to imagine where his real grievance lay. Muhammad Hassan was the Nazim of Gonda under the Nawab of Awadh, but established himself as Nazim of Gorakhpur. He also extended his influence to Basti, the neighbouring district, though his authority was challenged both by the Raja of Bansi and the Rani of Basti.[66] He did not come into prominence in the early phases of the revolt, but held out against the British till the end. What invests his revolt with importance is the sentiment he expressed in November, 1858, when asked by a friend to submit and take advantage of the Queen's Proclamation. His reply is an interesting one. On the one hand, he points out that the "phraseology of the proclamation where it promises pardon of offences is somewhat obscure and indefinite", implying that he would have submitted if he were sure of pardon. On the other hand, he says that he regards himself as a servant of the King of Awadh and would rather die "fighting for my religion and earthly sovereign."[67]

Hanumant Singh, Beni Madho and Muhammad Hasan represent a new class who, in addition to recovery of their landed properties and preservation of religion, also include allegiance to the king of Awadh among the motives which impelled them to fight. But it is interesting to note that none of these three, though powerful and valorous, did rally round the Begam Hazrat Mahal, and unreservedly placed his resources at her disposal. None of them played any important part in the life-and-death struggle before Lakhnau

which was to determine the fate of the revolt.[68] The position of this centre of rebellion, even so late as the end of December, was very frankly put by the Begam.

"...In a meeting of all the chiefs, held on 22 December, she severely harangued the leaders and denounced them for their indifference. She is reported to have said: Great things were promised from the all-powerful Delhi, and my heart used to be gladdened by the communications I used to receive from that city, but soon the king has been dispossessed and his army scattered. The English have bought over the Sikhs and Rajas,.........and communications are cut off. The Nana has been vanquished, Lucknow is endangered—what is to be done ? The whole army is in Lucknow, but it is without courage. Why does it not attack Alumbaugh ? Is it waiting for the Engligh to be reinforced and Lucknow to be surrounded ? How much longer am I to pay the sepoys for doing nothing ? Answer me now, and if fight you won't, I shall negotiate with the English to spare my life.

The chiefs answered: Fear not, we shall fight, for if we do not, we shall be hanged one by one, we have that fear before our eyes. The party swore to stick by one another and then dispersed.[69]

If this contemporary account may be taken to be substantially correct, it must be regarded as of great importance. The laconic reply of the chiefs throws welcome light on the psychology of the rebel chiefs. They were at first content with the limited objectives of recovering their lost lands, establishing local authority, and achieving similar other selfish ends. It was only in the last phase, when faced with the imminent danger of gallows, that they awoke to a sense of responsibility to fight the English with their might. The reference to the payment of sepoys is also an interesting revelation.

Throughout his work Dr. S. B. Chaudhuri has waxed eloquent over the great war of liberation in Awadh, calling

forth fervent activities of the chiefs and people. It is significant, however, that the most important items of the activities referred to by him were, ejecting the auction-purchasers, resuming the lost lands, and establishing the personal rule within a prescribed limit. Dr. Chaudhuri often refers to their throwing off the British yoke. But this was already achieved by the mutiny of the sepoys, and required no efforts on their part. So the detailed account of the activities of the numerous chiefs in Awadh and neighbouring regions which fills the pages of Dr. Chaudhuri's book does not really give an impression of a great war of liberation from the British yoke.

It is true that many influential landlords joined the revolt and when, after reaping a rich harvest, they were brought to bay by the returning—and avenging—English force, gave a good account of themselves. The fight they fought, be it remembered, was for *retaining* the wealth and privileges which they had unlawfully secured, and not for gaining freedom for the whole or part of India. When the day of reckoning came many of them fought till the last ditch and showed skill, heroism and courage, which extort our unstinted admiration. In that hour of trial, they gave a dignity to their action by invoking high principles in support of their conduct. A few of them, but very few, even openly professed to fight for their king and country, but there is no evidence that even a year back[70] they cared much for either the one or the other.

4. OTHER PARTS OF INDIA

The mutiny of the sepoys outside the areas discussed above did not lead to the revolt of the civil people on a large scale, except in a small part of Bihar, particularly the Shahabad district, and the eastern fringe of the Panjab. There were also minor disturbances in Central India. These formed an outer circle to Awadh and Rohilkhand which constituted the central zone of the civil rebellion.

A. BIHAR

As mentioned above[71], the sepoys of Danapur broke out into mutiny on 25 July, and marched towards Arrah, a small town about twenty-five miles to the west. Here the mutiny was converted into a rebellion of the civil population under the guidance of Kunwar Singh, the *Tālukdar* of Jagdishpur near Arrah. This brave Rajput Chief proved to be the greatest military leader thrown up by the outbreak of 1857. A critical review of the part played by him will be found in Book III, Chapter V. Only a brief account of his activities will be given in this and the next chapter.

Mr. Tayler, the Commissioner of Patna, who had been apprehending the mutiny of sepoys at Danapur (Dinapore) for a long time, had warned the European residents of Arrah and sent fifty of Rattray's Sikhs to help them. They had put the house of Boyle in a state of defence. As soon as the news reached Arrah that the mutinous sepoys had crossed the Son river, the fifteen European and Eurasians, the Deputy-Collector Azimuddin, and the fifty Sikhs took shelter in Boyle's house.[72]

On July 27 the Danapur mutineers reached Arrah and, as usual, looted the treasury and almost every bungalow, released the prisoners and burnt the civil court and many other houses. Then they attacked Boyle's house, under the leadership of Kunwar Singh who joined them on the same day. But the small besieged garrison kept up a sharp fire and forced the mutineers to retreat. The brave Sikhs stood solidly behind the European besieged, and were not moved either by an appeal to their religious and racial sentiments or by the tempting offer of Rs. 500 each as a price of desertion.

On the 29th a detachment under Captain Dunbar, sent from Patna for the relief of the garrison at Arrah, was attacked at night when it was entering the suburbs of Arrah, and forced to retreat with heavy loss. Kunwar Singh now proclaimed himself the ruler of the country and set up his

own machinery of administration. But it was shortlived. Arrah was relieved, on August 3, by Vincent Eyre,[73] an artillery officer who was proceeding by river from Calcutta to Allahabad. With the help of some troops from Buxar he advanced towards Arrah, and was opposed by Kunwar Singh. But Eyre defeated his force at Gujrajgunj, close to Arrah, and not only relieved the garrison at Arrah, but also sacked Jagdishpur, the residential village of Kunwar Singh, after again defeating him on August 12. After this disaster Kunwar Singh proceeded with the sepoys and his own retainers towards Sasaram in the south.

In the meantime the rebellious spirit affected the civil population in Shahabad as in Rohilkhand and Awadh. The administrative machinery set up by Kunwar Singh must have collapsed after his defeat and flight. But sporadic acts of rebellion continued on a wide scale. It was estimated that seven to ten thousand men were involved—mostly "the war-like population of the Rajput villages headed by brave chieftains".

"The basic feature of the rebellion in Shahabad", says Dr. Chaudhuri, "is reflected in the wholesale destruction of European property effected by the rebels". In particular, quite a large number of indigo factories were destroyed. This shows that the "nature of the upsurge in Shahabad" did not materially differ from that in Rohilkhand, described above. The rebellion was stiffened by the threat of "wholesale burning and destruction of all villages" by the Magistrate.[74]

There was a similar upsurge in the Gaya district, in which several local leaders followed in the footsteps of those of Rohilkhand. Hyder Ali Khan of Rajgir Pargana "collected a large body of men, proclaimed himself Raja and drove away all Government servants". Judhar Singh of Arwal also played a similar part. "He set up his own rule making grants of land and even whole villages to his followers". Fourteen villages in Wazirgunj, 14 miles to the east of Gaya, raised the flag of independence under Kusal Singh, a *ticadar*

of many villages. Other local leaders also proclaimed the fall of the "English raj" and prevailed upon the shop-keepers and traders not to pay their dues to the British Government.[75]

There was also a wave of insurrections in Chota-Nagpur among the aboriginal tribes.[76] "...The military at Hazaribagh revolted on 30 July, 1857, the Ramgarh battalion on 1 August, the infantry and artillery at Lohardaga on 2 August, and the detachment of the Ramgarh troops of Purulia on 5 August..."[77]

Both Ranchi and Doranda soon fell under the control of the mutinous sepoys who, as usual, plundered the treasury and released the prisoners. Some of the *Zamindars* helped the mutineers, while others helped the British officials. The rebels were defeated in a severe engagement at Chatra on 4 October, 1857, in which 46 British soldiers were killed or wounded. Though, as a result of this victory, Hazaribagh, Ranchi and Purulia were re-occupied by the British, the mutiny was merged into a general rising of the civil population in Singhbhum and Palamau. There was a widespread insurrection among the Kols of Singhbhum organized by Raja Arjun Singh of Porahat and his brother. To quell this insurrection proved to be a difficult task. On one occasion a small military force led by Mr. Lushington was suddenly surrounded by about four thousand infuriated Kols and met with a serious reverse, about the middle of January, 1858. "Not an officer escaped unhurt", says the official report. An attack made by the British troops on Chakradharpur, the residence of the Porahat Raja, was also repulsed, but it was soon captured after the arrival of reinforcements. Though repeatedly defeated, the Kols bravely resisted till the capture of the Raja of Porahat in 1859.

The Cheros and Khairwars of Palamau rose under the leadership of two brothers, Pitambar Sahi and Nilamber (or Lilambar) Sahi. They attacked Chainpur, 2 miles distant from Daltonganj, on 21 October, 1857, but were repulsed by its owner Raghubir Dayal Singh, who gave protection to

Lieutenant Graham and his small force when, by the end of November, "the whole country appeared to be up in arms", according to an official report. It was a difficult job to put down the revolt in an area of 40 miles square of intractable hills and dense jungles,—so dense that an enemy might be within a few hundred yards of troops without being discovered. It also appears that the rebels were promised help from Kunwar Singh and his brother, though it is not clear whether any such help was actually received. After several skirmishes, the British force attacked the fort of Palamau and captured it on 21 January, 1858. Though several leaders were captured, Pitambar and Nilambar evaded arrest. As measures of retaliation "their villages were destroyed, their goods and cattle seized, and their estates confiscated to the State". But the insurrection continued throughout 1858 with unabated vigour, marked by plunder of villages and guerilla fights with British forces. Nilambar Sahi and Pitambar Sahi were ultimately captured and hanged, and the revolt was completely subdued in 1859.

Sambalpur was the scene of a prolonged and protracted rebellion under the leadership of Surendra Sai[78]. Long before the outbreak of 1857, he had created serious disturbances as his right to the throne was not recognized by the British Government, and was imprisoned for life for committing a murder in 1839. While he was serving the sentence, Sambalpur was annexed to the British Dominions by Lord Dalhousie in accordance with the Doctrine of Lapse. As in other localities, newly annexed, the British administration was signalised by an enormous increase in the amount of land revenue and the resumption of *Inam* lands. According to official figures the revenue, amounting to Rs. 8,800 before the annexation, was raised to Rs. 74,000 after the introduction of British administration. It caused profound distress and discontent, and when the mutineers released Surendra Sai along with other prisoners in the Ranchi jail, he raised the banner of revolt which was joined by all and sundry. "From

the close of 1857 to the commencement of 1862 he remained in a state of war, ran a parallel government of his own and kept the whole country in a dangerous state of excitement".[79] He surrendered in 1862 and the disturbances ceased for the time being. But they were renewed within a few years.

The rebellion in these hilly regions was no doubt of a 'popular character', but there was nothing new in it. They had similarly rebelled many times before[80], and in several cases, as in Sambalpur, the outbreaks in 1857 were mere legacies of the past. To describe it as "a people's war fought with the passions roused up by deeply stirred political sentiment",[81] can only be regarded as hyperbole. They differed in degree, but not in kind, from the previous disturbances noted above.

B. THE PANJAB

In the Panjāb the Government successfully worked upon the traditional hostility between the Muslims and the Sikhs, and the Panjābis and Hindusthanis. The important chiefs, like those of Patiala, Nabha, and Jhind, stood firmly by the British. The Panjāb therefore remained mostly unaffected by outbreaks of civil population, save in the eastern fringe contiguous to Delhi and Rohilkhand.

In the Western Panjāb the civil population remained unaffected, a notable exception being the rising of the Kharrals under Ahmad Khan in Multan on September 17. Joined by several other tribes on the Ravi, he fought several engagements in one of which he was killed. At one time the insurrection took a serious turn, but was thoroughly crushed in November[82].

In the Eastern Panjāb the mutineers were joined by the civil population in several places and the mutinies almost partook the character of those of Rohilkhand. At Hissar and Hansi a large number of Europeans and Christians were killed, and a petty official put himself at the head of the administration under the style Shahzada. At Sirsa the rising

took a communal turn. The Hindus fled, and the Muslims plundered not only the treasury but also the town and the neighbouring villages. The predatory tribes of the locality took full advantage of the situation, and the Gujar, Ranghars, Pachhadas, Bhattias, etc. looted all alike. Some Jath villages in Karnal district refused to pay revenue. They drove out the Government officials, burnt Government buildings, and committed robberies and murders. They had little respect for the mutineers and freely robbed the sepoys who were proceeding to Delhi. In some cases even the ordinary villagers helped the Government against the sepoys. There were also outbreaks at Rohtak and Rewari, but these were easily suppressed[83].

FOOTNOTES

1. See pp. 22 ff.
2. Holmes, 506, fn.
3. *Narrative*, pp. 8-9, the Report of the Magistrate of Allahabad, dated November 9, 1858. See fn. 21.
4. *SB*-II. 25-6.
5. Ibid, 75.
6. *Narrative*, 349 ff.
7. Ibid, 467 ff.
8. *SB*-II, 76-7.
9. Ibid, 77-8.
10. *Siege*, pp. 62-3.
11. Durgadas Bandyopadhyaya, a Bengali employed as a clerk in the Cavalry Department at Bareilly at the time. He has written a book, in Bengali, narrating in detail the incidents of the mutiny at Bareilly. For his account of the beginning of the mutiny at Bareilly see Sen, 346-7.

11a. See p. 11.

12. Sen, 347-8.
13. Sen, 349
14. *Narrative*, 372.
15. Durgadas Bandyopadhyaya, *Bidrohe Bangali* (in Bengali), pp. 146, 206, 211, 215-6. 343, 459. The official *Narrative* (p. 374) also refers to the anti-Bengali feelings of Khan Bahadur's Government. As regards the communal tension mentioned by Bandyopadhyaya, the following

statement in the official *Narrative* (p. 378) corroborates it: "Nana arrived at Bareilly on 25 March and remained there till the end of April (1858). He found that the rebellion had assumed an entirely Muhammadan character; he made some attempts to put a stop to cow-killing in the city and also to induce the Hindus to join the Mahomedans in opposing the English, but without success." Another statement in the same official *Narrative* may also be quoted in this connection: "After the fall of Lucknow Firoz Shah returned to Bareilly with about 1,000 men, and then by a sudden attack got possession of Moradabad for one day; he at once issued orders for a tax on all Hindus. Next day, being attacked by the troops of the Nawab of Rampur he fled to Bareilly (*Narrative*, I. 378).

16. Holmes, 138-40; K. III, 296 ff.
17. K. II. 363.
18. M. III. 401.
19. *SB*-II, 110; M. II. 520.
20. *Narrative*, 443 ff; summarised in SB-II, 116-7.
21. Referred to in this chapter as *Narrative*.
22. *Narrative*, pp. 459 ff.
23. *SB*-II, 115.
24. *Narrative*, 213 ff.
25. Ibid, 92 ff.
26. Ibid, 64 ff.
27. Ibid, 521 ff; SB-II. 209.
28. *SB*-II. 209-10.
29. *Narrative*, I. 546 ff.
30. For the documents cf *BPP*, LXXVI, Part I, p. 52. III-B and pp. 53-4, III-D.
31. Holmes, 496.
32. *SB*-II. 223.
33. Ibid, 207.
34. Ibid, 215.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid, 207.
37. Ibid, 226.
38. Ibid, 223.
39. Ibid, 210.
40. *Narrative*, p. 357.
41. *SB*-II, 109.
42. Ibid, 108; Italics mine.
43. M. II. 520.
44. Sen, 409.

45. Cf. Raikes, 156 ff., the text of which is reproduced later in BK. IV, Chs. II, III, also Sen, 410-11, where other views are quoted.

46. See above, p. 75.

47. Holmes, 259-60; FM. I. 217.

48. See p. 100.

49. See p. 100.

50. For a list of the rebel *Talukdars*, cf. SB-II. 121 ff., 129 ff., 305 ff.

51. See pp. 130-1.

52. Holmes, 265.

53. The account is based on Holmes, 273 ff. The date of the first general assault is given as 21 July by Malleson (I. 449).

54. *SB*-II, 127, 135.

55. Holmes, 297, 271. Holmes has elaborately discussed the question in Appendix S, pp. 624 ff. Dr. S. B. Chaudhuri has discussed the question at length in Appendix C. (*SB*-II, 309 ff.). For a list of the *Talukdars* who joined the besieging force at Lakhnau, cf. *SB*-II. 130-31. Cf. *HCIP*, IX. pp. 542 ff.

56. *SB*-II, 119.

57. Sen, 197.

58. Ibid, 187.

59. Ibid, 224.

60. Gubbins, 156.

61. Sen, 215.

62. Holmes, 587; *SB*-II, 119-20, 130.

63. For the names of a few *Talukdars* who were at first loyal to the British, but later turned against them, cf. *SB*-II, 120, 121, f.n., 2. Dr. Chaudhuri is constrained to admit that "the widespread idea that the British rule was fast disappearing induced many chiefs like the rajas of Nagar and Satsi and the zamindars of Amorah to take up arms" (p. 145).

64. Gubbins, 158.

65. So comments Dr. Sen (p. 188). Whether Hanumant Singh deserves the epithet 'true-hearted' will perhaps be questioned by many. But according to some official records (*Secret Letters from India*, 1858, CRO, London, Vol. 163, pp. 403-5) Hanumant Singh fought against the British at Lakhnau in October (Cf. *SB*-II. 139, 141, 143, 310.)

66. *SB*-II, 145, 147. The Rani of Basti was the niece of Kunwar Singh, the great leader of the rebellion in Bihar. The fact that she challenged the authority of Muhammad Hasan shows that there was hardly any conception of common cause even among the leading figures.

67. The whole correspondence between Muhammad Hasan and Khair-ud-din has been given by Sen (App. II. pp. 385-91). Hasan's

letter contains noble sentiments and presents a refreshing contrast *to* the cringing appeal of Nana, for mercy, to the British Government, in similar circumstances. But it would be a mistake to elevate him to the status of a national hero. The following passage in his letter is significant: "This rebellion arose solely out of the annexation of Oude. Had that not taken place there would have been no bloodshed, because no defection of the chiefs, who would have on the contrary, inflicted chastisement on the mutinous sepoys" (p. 388). But one may legitimately doubt whether the allegiance or loyalty to the king of Awadh was the sole cause or even the mainspring of his action. He did not join the mutineers of Awadh at the beginning. Nor does it appear that he flocked to the standard of Begam Hazrat Mahal and placed his resources at her service.

68 The name of none of these is included in the list, given by Gubbins, of the rebel leaders who distinguished themselves by the most active and unprovoked hostility in the early phase of the war. Dr. Chaudhuri also does not refer to their activities in connection with the siege of Lakhnau (Gubbins, 487; *SB*-II. 131-2).

69. *Secret Letters from India*, 1858, Vol. 163, pp. 443-445; quoted in *SB*-II. 134-5.

70. That is, when the King of Awadh was dethroned.

71. See p. 89.

72. Sen, 255; Holmes puts the total number as 68 (p. 191).

73. The resistance of the small garrison to the force led by Kunwar Singh is one of the most thrilling episodes in the history of the Mutiny, perhaps not ranking below the heroic defence of Lakhnau. The failure to reduce the garrison reflects the greatest discredit on the valour and resourcefulness of the sepoys, and shows, in striking contrast, those very qualities so remarkably displayed by the handful of Englishmen.

74. *SB*-II, 173.

75. Ibid, 182-3.

76. For a detailed account of the rebellions, cf. *SB*-II, 183 ff; *Freedom, Bihar.* 50 ff.; *Journal of the University of Bihar,* II. 78.

77. *SB*-II, 183.

78. *Sambalpur District Gazetteer*, 26-7; *SB*-II. 196 ff.

79. *SB*-II. 196.

80. See above, pp. 60 ff.

81. *SB*-II. 191.

82. Sen. 343-4.

83. *SB*-II. 235 ff.

CHAPTER IV

RESTORATION OF ORDER

At the time of the outbreak of the Mutiny, the native troops in the whole of India amounted to 2,32,224 men, while there were only 45,522 European soldiers of all arms including 6,170 officers.[1] The distribution of these soldiers was still more favourable to the sepoys. Large masses of sepoys were concentrated at a number of stations between Calcutta and Delhi, but there was only a single British regiment at Agra, and another at Danapur.

The sepoys, however, failed to take advantage of this favourable situation. It appears that they had no general plan of a regular campaign. Had they any, then, after they had established complete control over Awadh and Rohilkhand, they must have concentrated upon at least two points: (1) the security of Delhi as their base of operations by preventing the British coming from the Panjab; and (2) a swift march in large numbers towards the east with the two-fold object of preventing attack from that direction and seizing the citadel of British power, namely, Calcutta. According to all reasonable calculations the sepoys at Delhi and the rebel chiefs of Rohilkhand, pooling their resources, could have defended the narrow highway in the Karnal district through which alone the troops from the Panjab could approach Delhi. Further, "they might have swept down the valley of the Ganges, seized Allahabad, Benares and Patna, and, gathering strength on their way till their numbers had become irresistible, destroyed every trace of European civilisation, and massacred every European till they had reached the frontiers of Eastern Bengal".[2] But the sepoys neither made any aggressive campaign towards the east, nor took sufficient measures to prevent the siege of Delhi.

The inactivity of the sepoys enabled the British Government to take immediate steps to prevent these two dangerous moves. They despatched expeditionary forces from Calcutta towards the west, and arranged to concentrate their forces, already in the west, for the supreme task of retaking Delhi, which they rightly judged to be the real centre of the whole revolution. Instead of giving a chronological account of the various military incidents, it would be more convenient to describe in broad outline the general features of those two campaigns.

As soon as the news of the Mutiny reached Lord Canning, the Governor-General, he took all possible steps to concentrate all the available forces from Bombay, Madras, and Pegu in Calcutta; he even requested the Governor of Ceylon to send him as many men as possible, and, on his own responsibility, asked the British Expeditionary Force, proceeding to China, to divert its course to Calcutta. At the same time he ordered John Lawrence, the Chief Commissioner of the Panjab, to send down every available Sikh and European soldier from the Panjab to Delhi. In answer to Canning's appeal Colonel James Neill of the 1st Madras Fusiliers arrived in Calcutta towards the end of May, and was entrusted with the work of securing Banaras and Allahabad, and relieving Kanpur.

Neill arrived at Banaras on June 3, and next day came the news of the mutiny of sepoys at Azamgarh (June 3). It was decided, as a measure of safety, to disarm the 37th N. I. at Banaras, though they had as yet showed no signs of disaffection. The hour of disarming was discussed for a long time and Neill threw his weight in favour of immediate action. "He was one of those who wisely thought from the first, that to strike promptly and to strike vigorously would be to strike mercifully".[3] So a parade was held on the 4th June at 5 P.M. in order to disarm the 37th N.I. with the help of the European troops aided by the loyal Sikhs and Irregular Cavalry. The sepoys submitted without resistance, though not without protest. Then, suddenly, the European troops were seen

coming with cartridges and grape-shots, and all along the sepoy line ran the cry that they had come to kill the sepoys. Some of the sepoys took up the arms they had laid down and fired upon the European troops. The latter returned the fire and the artillery poured in a shower of grape upon the mutineers who fled. What followed is not exactly known, as the accounts differ. The Sikhs and the Irregular Cavalry had just reached the parade ground. According to one version, the artillery opened fire on them without provocation, while according to the other, one of the Irregulars had fired at his commanding officer, and the Sikhs, apprehensive of treachery, rushed wildly against the artillery men. In any case, there was fearful discharge of grape from the artillery against the Sikhs, who broke and fled. Neill, who had taken command in the meantime, pursued the Sikhs and gained a complete victory. Even Tucker, the Commissioner, held that the business of disarming was managed very badly, and the Governor-General agreed with him. As Kaye says, it was done badly because it was done hastily, for which Neill was mainly responsible.[4]

Fortunately for the British, the Raja of Banaras and some leading Sikh and Hindu Chiefs loyally stood by them. Surat Singh, a Sikh Chief interned by the British at Banaras after the Second Sikh War, now came to their rescue, and pacified the Sikh soldiers guarding the *cutchery* "who might have been excused if they were burning to avenge the blood of their slaughtered comrades." The *cutchery* was full of the English Civilians with their families, and contained the Government treasury, including the crown-jewels of Rani Jindan, the exiled Sikh Queen-mother. The temptation of massacring the Englishmen and plundering the treasury was too great and might be well justified by the treatment meted out to the Sikh soldiers on the parade ground. But at Surat Singh's persuasion they desisted from both. The refugee Englishmen suffered no injury and the treasure was conveyed to a place of safety.

Far different was the attitude of Neill. He was not content merely with the suppression of the mutiny. He proclaimed the majesty of the British power by instituting a veritable reign of terror in which the guilty and the innocent were alike treated with the most barbarous cruelty to which reference will be made later.

The events of Banaras had wide repercussions, as the sepoys now came to believe that even loyalty and faithfulness was no guarantee against ill-treatment by the authorities. Further, the news spread that the men of the 37th N. I. had been disarmed first and then killed, and this easily led to a wide-spread belief that the British officers had matured a plan of exterminating the entire Bengal Army.

There is little doubt that the mutiny at Allahabad was the direct result of such feelings. The 6th N. I., posted there, had offered to march against the mutineers at Delhi, but on 6 June they rose in arms. The usual things happened. The convicts were released; the city mob joined the sepoys; Europeans were hunted out and killed; houses were plundered and burnt, and even Hindu pilgrims suffered at the hands of the rowdies. Indeed no element was lacking in making it a "tremendous upsurge of the city populace" which is thus described by Dr. Chaudhuri: The populace "first inaugurated a religious war by hoisting the flag of the Prophet in the *chouk*. They then joined the sepoys in pillage; railway works and telegraphic wires were destroyed, the treasury plundered, and records burnt. After a short period, the universal rapine with all its confusions began to take the shape of an organised rebellion and culminated in the assumption of power by Maulavi Liakatali, a common school master, a weaver by caste, who proclaimed the rule of the King of Delhi and passed himself as his governor. His reign was of short duration, but he was actively supported by a wide circle of eminent Mahomedans."[5] An eminent Indian historian has recorded it to the credit of the Maulavi that "many Indian Christians were permitted to purchase their lives at

the price of their religion."[6] Many would perhaps regard it as a doubtful compliment.

But though the city was lost the British still held the fort, mainly with the help of 400 loyal Sikhs. Neill hastened from Banaras to relieve Allahabad. As horses were not available, he made the peasants draw his coach and reached Allahabad on 11 June. Within a week he cleared the city of all insurgents and then let loose his myrmidons who perpetrated all sorts of cruelties and barbarities which human ingenuity could conceive, Indiscriminate hanging and shooting without regard to age or sex, and general burning and plundering of houses and entire villages were the order of the day, regular punitive expeditions being sent for this purpose both by land and the river.

But evil sometimes recoils on its own doers. Kanpur was piteously crying for help, but Neill's march was delayed. Neill thought it his first duty to terrorise the natives and teach them a lesson, and then, when he was ready to start, he found that his penal measures had scared away the people to such an extent that neither food nor labourers were to be had in the region through which his forces had to pass. Even if he had left Allahabad on the 20th, as he could easily have done, Kanpur would have been saved. "It was Neill's hand that signed in letters of blood the doom of Kanpur and decreed the ordeal of Lucknow."[7] On the credit side of Neill must be put the not unjustified claim that "within a few days he had paralyzed the insurgent population of a crowded city and a wide district, and had rebuilt the shattered fabric of British authority."[8] A movable column was now formed at Allahabad "for the relief of Lucknow and Cawnpore and the destruction of all mutineers and insurgents in North-Western India."[9] Henry Havelock, who was placed in command of this column, left Allahabad on July 7. Havelock's campaigns against Nana Sahib will be described in detail in Book III, Chapter II. It will suffice here to state that Nana's troops were defeated in four successive engagements, and Havelock

entered Kanpur on 17 July, only to find that the European prisoners—men, women, and children—were all brutally killed. Nana had in the meantime fled to the other side of the Ganga.

We may now pass on to the Western theatre of operations. General Anson, the Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in India, was at Simla when he heard, on May 12, the news of the outbreak at Mirat. Although he made preliminary arrangements for an aggressive campaign, he thought it imprudent to risk an advance against Delhi with the small force then at his command. His plan was "to concentrate his whole force between the Sutlej and the Jumna, and, permitting the fire of rebellion to burn itself out within these limits, to wait until the arrival of reinforcements should enable him to quench it once for all".[10] But both the Governor-General, Lord Canning, and Sir John Lawrence, the Chief Commissioner of the Panjab, held very different views. They regarded the recovery of Delhi as of supreme importance in restoring the shattered prestige and dignity of the British rule in India, and "were prepared to sacrifice everything to this grand object".[11]

Anson had to obey the orders of his superior authority, and made his plan accordingly. But before he could carry it out, he died of cholera on May 27. General Sir Henry Barnard, who succeeded him, advanced at once to join the forces from Mirat which had been ordered to proceed towards Delhi, with a view to concentrating his whole force under the walls of that city.

The British troops left Mirat on 27 May under the command of Brigadier Wilson. Three days later they were opposed by the sepoys from Delhi who had occupied a strong position on the banks of the Hindun river, a few miles from Delhi. The sepoys were defeated and fled to Delhi, but returned next day with reinforcements. They were again defeated and retreated to Delhi. Wilson then marched unopposed and joined Barnard at Baghpat, twelve miles from

Delhi, on 7 June. The sepoys had, in the meantime, occupied a strong position at a place called Badli-ka-Sarai, about five miles to the north-west of Delhi. The British made a frontal attack and carried the position by assault, though the sepoys fought bravely and had the advantages of both terrain and number. They fell back and took their position on the Ridge, an elevated and continuous line of rocky ground, which extended from the banks of the Yamuna for about a distance of two miles skirting along the north and west of the walled city of Delhi, and at one point at a distance of less than a mile from its Kashmiri Gate. It was a very strategic position, as it commanded the whole of the walled city of Delhi. The sepoys, helped by the guns of the city, held out resolutely for some time, but were ultimately driven back within the city walls. The British force was much smaller than the sepoys, and suffered from the galling fires directed against it not only from the heavy battery which the sepoys had established at the Flagstaff Tower on the Ridge, but also from the cover of walls and gardens. The casualties of the British were naturally very heavy, but they secured a commanding position of inestimable value. Henceforth the Ridge formed the base of their operations.

Both Canning and Lawrence, and with them many others who had no personal knowledge of the strength of Delhi, fondly hoped that the capture of Delhi would be a comparatively easy task, and the period of siege would not extend beyond a few days. But they were sadly mistaken. The city "was surrounded by a wall, about seven miles in extent and some twenty-four feet in height, strengthened by a number of bastions, and possessing ten massive gates. Around the wall ran a dry ditch, about twenty-five feet wide and rather less than twenty feet deep". The fortifications of the city were recently repaired and the British General soon discovered that they were too strong to be battered down by the artillery he had at his disposal. The force under him was, of course, too small for the purpose of blockading the city,

and a part of it had to be employed for preventing the enemy from cutting off his communications with the Panjab to which alone he could look for supply and reinforcements. In spite, therefore, of the strongly expressed desire of the Government that he should capture Delhi without delay, and the irrepressible ardour of some younger officers to the same effect, he did not try to take the city by assault. He occupied the Ridge and placed his troops behind it, in regular cantonments, thus preparing himself for a long operation. All the while, Delhi's communications with the other parts of India remained absolutely safe and unhampered, and the ranks of the sepoys were swelled by fresh arrivals.

The mutinous sepoys from various localities had gathered at Delhi and they lacked neither courage nor military qualities. But there were no officers to guide their operations as a combined unit, and no general to formulate a strategic plan of the whole campaign. They abandoned the Ridge without making an effort corresponding to its vital importance; they allowed the house of Metcalfe to fall into the hands of the enemy whose left wing thereby stretched to the river. On 19 June, the sepoys attacked the British from the rear of Ridge and held their ground, when the evening came and the British retired with heavy loss. It was a serious danger for the British, for if the sepoys held on to the position they had occupied, "British communication with the Punjab would have been completely cut off and they would have found themselves besieged on ridge".[12] But the sepoys did not realize the advantages and quietly retired during the night. "Many devout Englishmen on the ridge sincerely believed that God was with them and had confounded their enemies".[13] The sepoys also believed in their stars and trusted in prophecy that the British rule would last for only 100 years. So on June 23, the centenary of the Battle of Plassey (Palasi), they furiously attacked the British. They fought desperately for the whole day with stubborn courage, and for a long time victory inclined to

their side. But ultimately they had to fall back to the city at sunset.

It is a very strange feature of the strategy of the sepoys that no determined and sustained effort was made to intercept the troops coming from the Panjab in the long and narrow region between Karnal and Delhi through which they had to pass. The site was admirably suited to such purpose, and history shows that whenever India was threatened by foreign invaders from the north-west, her fate was decided in a final contest over the possession of this bottle-neck. But though history and geography alike pointed out the great strategic position of this area, the sepoys never fully grasped the advantage offered by it.

On 3 July the sepoys sent an expedition to intercept a British convoy from the Panjab at Alipur but failed. Later, on 25 August, the sepoys made an equally unsuccessful attempt to intercept the siege train from the Panjab under the escort of a weak native detachment, but not till it had reached the neighbourhood of Delhi, where it could be protected by the British forces besieging that city. With the exception of these two, the sepoys never tried to intercept the supply line of the British between the Panjab and Delhi. On the other hand, they concentrated their whole attention upon the British force on the Ridge. Sepoys from every part of India poured into Delhi, and it almost became a custom for every fresh band of mutineers to attack the British on the Ridge. Thus the fighting on the Ridge continued, almost without a pause, and more than twenty battles were fought between June 8 and July 18.

So the two armies remained face to face, and none was able to create any impression on the other. On the whole it may be said that the British force was more in the position of a besieged than a besieging army. Nevertheless time proved to be an important factor in favour of the British. For inside the city of Delhi everything was in chaos and confusion. Administration had completely broken down,

and indiscriminate plunder by the sepoys was the order of the day. The civil population, or at least a considerable part of it, was tired of the excesses of the sepoys, and longed for the return of the British. The old and infirm Bahadur Shah was unable to maintain control over the sepoys who were fighting in his name. He had enough of the *Badshahi* which was thrust upon him against his will, and secretly conspired with the British. The sepoys grew suspicious and showed but scant respect to Bahadur Shah whom they had declared the Emperor of Hindusthan only a few days back. On one occasion they even threatened to enter the *Zenana Mahal* in order to carry away Zinnat Mahal and to keep her as hostage for the loyalty of Bahadur Shah to their cause. The sepoys also quarrelled among themselves over the share of the loot they had secured from the shop-keepers and rich citizens of Delhi[14]. As against all this the British were pursuing with a dogged determination the objective of capturing Delhi. Reinforcements in men and heavy siege-materials were pouring in from the Panjab, and the strength of the British besieging force had gone up to 6,000.

As suspected by the sepoys, it is now known with certainty, that while all this grim fight was going on, Bahadur Shah, the leader of the sepoys, his chief queen, sons, and the most trusted adviser, Hakim Ahsanulla, were all conspiring with the English. The intrigues failed, probably because the British had realised that these people had really no power to do any good or ill to them, all effective authority being concentrated in the hands of the sepoys. But the treacherous intrigues and the conduct of the sepoys give us an inside view of the moral bankruptcy of the spirit lying behind the struggle against the British. While the British were of one mind and pursuing, under able leadership and with a dogged determination, the common and glorious objective of capturing Delhi as the first step towards recovering their lost empire, the sepoys were fighting under the leadership of a traitor, without any clear goal or high moral idea, inspired only by the hatred

of the English; and a desire to drive them away and save themselves[15]. The result of such a fight could not be long in doubt, even if the two forces were equally matched. But, as the events had repeatedly proved, the sepoys were no match for their opponents in point of strategy or generalship.

On August 7, Nicholson arrived with reinforcements from the Panjab, and the siege-train was on its way. The sepoys made an attempt to intercept it, and sent a large force to Nujufgarh. But it was defeated by Nicholson with only two thousand men on August 25, and the siege-train arrived safely on the 4th September. After making all necessary preparation, the British force made a full-scale attack on Delhi on September 14. The Kashmir Gate was forced, and a few columns of the British troops advanced as far as the Chandni Chawk ; but as the other columns could not make equally satisfactory progress, they had to fall back. The casualty was very heavy on both sides, and brave Nicholson was mortally wounded near the Kashmir Gate. The net result of the day's fighting was that the British troops had effected an entrance into the city ; but their position was still very insecure, as the defenders held their own in many sectors. During the next three days the British force slowly advanced into the heart of the city, being resisted by the sepoys at every stage. The formidable Lahore bastion was won by sapping the houses leading to it during the 18th and 19th. On September 20, the British troops took the Lahore Gate and the Jumma Masjid, and finally the gates of the Red Fort were blown in, and the British flag flew from its rampart.

When the fall of Delhi became imminent, Bakht Khan, the Commander of the sepoys, left the city with his troops, and requested Bahadur Shah to accompany him. But the latter refused, and took shelter with his family in the tomb of Humayun, about six miles to the south of the Red Fort. Hodson, who was in charge of the Intelligence Department, came to know of this, and pointed out to the Commanding

Officer the supreme importance of seizing the person of the King. In order to facilitate the capture, it was decided to offer the King the guarantee for his life. Whether the suggestion originally came from Hodson or Wilson, the Commander-in-Chief, it is difficult to say. According to Wilson's A.D.C., who was present on the occasion, Wilson at first refused permission to Hodson to capture the king, and also rejected the suggestion that the king's life should be guaranteed: but at last reluctantly yielded to the remonstrances of those around him and gave way on both these points. Hodson himself wrote three days after the event: "I assured him (Wilson) it was nothing but his own order which bothered him with the king, as I would much rather have brought him into Delhi dead than living." But, on February 12, 1858, he wrote: "General Wilson refused to send troops in pursuit of him (the King), and, to avoid greater calamities, I then, and not till then, asked and obtained permission to offer him his wretched life, on the ground, and solely on the ground, that there was no other way of getting him into our possession."[16]

Bahadur Shah surrendered to Hodson on the sole condition that his life should be spared. Thereupon he, along with his favourite Begam Zinnat Mahal and her son, was taken to the Palace within the Red Fort, on 21 September. Next day Hodson again rode to Humayun's tomb and arrested two sons of the King and one of his grandsons. Sending them in a bullock-cart to the city, Hodson remained behind to deal with the crowd of about 6,000 men who had gathered round the princes. He sternly ordered them to surrender their arms, and they obeyed. Hodson then rode towards the city and found that the cart carrying the princes was surrounded by a huge crowd. According to his own version, the crowd menaced the escort and he felt that unless he killed the princes the mob would rescue them. So, he ordered the three princes to strip off their upper garments, and, seizing a carbine from one of his men, shot them all dead. No reasonable man has ever

attached the least value to the excuse offered by Hodson for this brutal conduct, which even English historians, not particularly critical of the terrorism let loose upon the hapless citizens of Delhi, have described as an outrage against humanity.[17]

Bahadur Shah, having spent some months in a miserable room in the palace, was tried by a court martial for rebellion and complicity in the murder of Europeans. He was found guilty and sentenced to imprisonment for life. He was exiled to Rangoon with his favourite queen, and died after four years, on November 7, 1862.

It is now necessary to go back a little and trace the military campaigns in the eastern zone. As mentioned above,[18] Havelock finally defeated Nana on July 16, and next day he entered Kanpur. On July 20, Neil joined him with a small force, and remained in charge of defending Kanpur, while Havelock proceeded towards Lakhnau to relieve the garrison there.

In the meantime clouds were gathering round Kanpur. After the defeat and flight of Nana, the real authority and initiative had passed into the hands of his able and devoted lieutenant Tantia Topi. Shortly after Havelock left Kanpur, Tantia gathered round him, or joined, a force of four thousand men at Bithur and threatened Kanpur. On hearing this news Havelock returned and inflicted a severe defeat upon Tantia Topi on 16 August. Then Tantia received orders from Nana to proceed to Gwalior to win over the sepoys of the Gwalior contingent. He succeeded in his task and, returning with the mutinous troops, seized Kalpi. Henceforth Tantia took his orders from Rao Sahib, the nephew of Nana, whom he had sent to Kalpi. Rao Sahib asked Tantia to seize Kanpur. Leaving a small detachment for defence, Tantia advanced upon Kanpur which was left in charge of General Windham with a small force. Though Tantia was defeated on the Pandu-nadi on 26 November, he attacked Kanpur the next day, and after a strenuous fight for two days

repulsed the British troops. The whole city as well as the baggage and stores fell into his hand. But the entrenchments and the bridge of boats over the Ganga were still in the possession of the British. At this critical moment Sir Collin Campbell, the British Commander-in-Chief, who had gone to relieve Lakhnau, hastened back to Kanpur and won a complete victory over Tantia's troops on 6 December. That was the last battle fought for Kanpur. Tantia fell back upon Kalpi, and his future activities were confined to the region further south to which reference will be made later.

It is now time to turn to Lakhnau where the tiny besieged garrison at the Residency were heroically defending themselves against enormous odds since June 30. As mentioned above, Havelock, immediately after the capture of Kanpur, proceeded towards Lakhnau on 25 July. The whole countryside was full of mutinous sepoys and many chiefs and landlords had joined them, as noted above. He won two successive victories at Unao and Basiratgunj on July 29, but "cholera, fatigue, exposure and the fire of the enemy had made such sad inroads on his little army"[19] that he thought it beyond his power to relieve Lakhnau without reinforcements, and retreated to Managalwar. But as his hope of receiving reinforcements did not materialize, he again advanced towards Lakhnau on August 4. He again won a victory at Basiratgunj on August 5, but was forced to fall back for the same reasons as before. On the 11th he received an urgent summons to come to the aid of Neill at Kanpur. In order to counteract the idea that he was fleeing from Awadh for fear, he advanced, inflicted another defeat on the enemy at Basiratgunj on August 12, fell back on Kanpur, and defeated Tantia Topi at Bithur on the 16th as stated above.

The retreat of Havelock had a very serious effect. The *Talukdars* or Chiefs of Awadh, who were hitherto sitting on the fence, now felt that the British Government was doomed, and cast in their lot with the rebels.[20]

For his failure to relieve Lakhnau Havelock was superseded in favour of Sir James Outram. Outram reached Kanpur on September 15, and immediately organized an expedition for the relief of Lakhnau. With characteristic magnanimity, unparalleled in military history, he put Havelock in charge of it, so that the honour of relieving Lakhnau might accrue to him. He himself accompanied the force in his civil capacity as Chief Commissioner of Awadh, waiving his rank for the occasion and tendering his military services to General Havelock as a volunteer. The augmented army under Havelock crossed the Ganga on September 19 and 20, and having fought two battles on the way, joined the garrison at Lakhnau on the evening of the 25th. But the main object of the expedition, viz., to remove the besieged people to a place of safety, such as Kanpur, was not fulfilled. For the army was not strong enough for the purpose, and sufficient means of transport were not available for conveying the women and children, the sick and the wounded. Outram, therefore, decided to wait until the arrival of a strong relieving force.

After the fall of Delhi, Sir Colin Campbell, the new Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in India, made the relief of Lakhnau his first objective. He started from Calcutta on October 27, and reached the city about the middle of November. After defeating the opposing forces he joined the besieged in the Residency on November 17, but in view of the large number of mutinous sepoys still surrounding that city, and the immediate need of relieving Kanpur, he did not continue his operations against the mutineers. Instead, he decided to start for Kanpur with the women, children, the sick, and the wounded, leaving Outram to hold the rebels in check until his return. The Residency was vacated, and Outram took his position at Alambagh outside the city. Havelock had died of dysentery at Lakhnau on 24 November.

It has been noted above how Sir Colin Campbell reached Kanpur at a critical moment, on 29 November, the day after

the city had fallen into the hands of Tantia Topi. After sending to Allahabad the convoy of the women and children, the sick and the wounded, whom he had brought from Lakhnau, Campbell inflicted a crushing defeat upon Tantia Topi on 6 December,

Sir Colin next occupied Fategarh, and sent flying columns to restore order in the Doab which was still full of mutinous sepoys and other rebel elements. It is unnecessary to describe their operations in detail beyond observing that they had no great difficulty in performing the task as there was seldom any organised opposition against them. At the same time they achieved little of real value. For the sepoys dispersed only to collect in another centre, and there was no sign of diminution of the spirit of resistance against law and order which resulted in many cases in indiscriminate loot and plunder of the Indians of all classes by the unruly elements of their own people. Meanwhile, grand preparations were set on foot to reconquer Awadh. This task was facilitated by the generous assistance offered by the Government of Nepal. A Gurkha army had already arrived in July, 1857, and taken possession of the districts of Azamgarh and Jaunpur after inflicting four successive defeats upon the rebels. But still the depredations continued. Canning thereupon requested Jang Bahadur to lead a Gurkha army through the northern parts of Varanasi Division and, after expelling the rebels, to proceed to Lakhnau to join the Commander-in-Chief. Jang Bahadur accordingly entered the British territory in December, 1857, at the head of an army of nine thousand men, and won some victories. In the meantime Sir Colin had equipped a most powerful army consisting of seventeen battalions of infantry, twenty-eight squadrons of cavalry, and a hundred and thirty-four guns and mortars, and left Kanpur on 28 February for Lakhnau.

Outram was defending his post at Alambagh, outside the city of Lakhnau, with a force which originally amounted to 4,442 men, of whom three-fourths were Europeans, and

twenty-five pieces of artillery. But allowing for the force required for garrisoning and convoy duties, little more than two thousand men were available for action in the field. As against this, the besieging force consisted of thirty-seven regiments of sepoys, fourteen of new levies, one hundred and six of irregulars, twenty-six of cavalry, four or five which fled to Lakhnau from Fategarh, a camel corps and artillery-men, besides the *Talukdars* with their retainers, and other elements,—in all at least over a hundred thousand men[21].

During the three months that had passed since Sir Colin's last military expedition to Lakhnau, the rebel forces, who were now in complete possession of the whole of the city, had considerably improved its defences by means of ramparts, bastions, and barricades. But in spite of their vast superiority in numbers they could not dislodge Outram from his fortified post at Alambagh. Maulavi Ahmadulla, who was a leading figure among the besiegers, knew full well that the British post must be taken now or never, and infused new strength and courage among them. On December 22, they tried to cut off the communication of Outram with Kanpur, but the latter, who forestalled their design, inflicted a severe defeat upon them, and they remained inactive for the next three weeks. On January 12 and 16, they again attacked Outram but were again defeated. On hearing the news of the huge preparations being made by Campbell, Ahmadulla made repeated efforts on February 15, 16, 21 and 25, but failed on each occasion. These failures sealed the fate of Lakhnau. On March 3 and 4, the advanced section of the British army reached the skirts of the city, and though the sepoys fought with stubborn courage, and offered resistance till the last, contesting every inch of ground even within the city itself, the British gained possession of the whole city by 21 March. The Gurkha troops under Jang Bahadur had joined the British army on 11 March, and took part in the assault on Lakhnau.

But the fall of Lakhnau did not materially contribute to the weakening of the rebellion in Awadh. For some unknown reasons Sir Colin Campbell did not follow up the capture of Lakhnau by any serious attempt to pursue and cut off the forces besieging that city. About sixty or seventy thousand armed men, with forty or fifty guns, who were thus allowed to retreat, scattered themselves all over Awadh, and their number was swelled by numerous other rebels roaming at large in that province. Fortunately for the British, these had no cohesion among themselves and were divided into a large number of groups. Each of these groups mostly acted for itself, and it is only on rare occasions that two or more of them joined to fight the common foe.

The most important of these groups was led by the Begam Hazrat Mahal, acting in close concert with that under Mammu Khan, her close confidant. Then there was Maulavi Ahmadulla, who had played the most distinguished part in the siege of the Residency at Lakhnau. The other leaders such as Rambaksh, Behunath Singh, Chandabakhsh, Ghulab Sing, Narpat Singh, Bhopal Singh, and Firoz Shah, were scattered over the province, never staying long at the same place, though they held some strong fortified places as their citadels. On the other hand, the British rule had almost completely disappeared from Rohilkhand for nearly a year. The main question for the British authorities now to decide was whether the subjugation of Rohilkhand or Awadh should take the priority in the programme of the next military campaign. Sir Colin himself desired to take up Awadh first. But Canning decided otherwise. So Sir Colin contented himself with merely sending a detachment against the two rebel groups assembled under the leadership of the Begam of Awadh and Maulavi Ahmadulla.

After the fall of Lakhnau, the Maulavi had taken up his position at Bari, 29 miles from that city, while the Begam with six thousand followers went to Bithauli. The Maulavi formed a very skilful plan to defeat the British force sent

against him by Sir Colin, but it was foiled by the indiscretion of his cavalry, and he was forced to retreat. The Begam left her post without any fight as soon as the British force advanced.

Sir Colin made an elaborate plan for the reconquest of Rohilkhand. Three columns advanced upon the country from the north-west, south-west, and south-east and Sir Colin himself left Lakhnau on 7 April. All these columns were to converge on Bareilly.

The first notable incident in the campaign was the heroic resistance offered by Narpat Singh of Ruya, fifty-one miles north-west of Lakhnau, with disastrous consequences to the British. Walpole, marching from Lakhnau, met with no opposition for eight days, till he arrived near this fort. The wall of this fort was very high on the side nearest to him, but it was so low on the other side that one could have easily jumped over it. Without making any proper reconnaissance Walpole attacked the near side of the fort. His infantry, decimated by a heavy fire, had to retreat, and more than a hundred men were killed, including Col. Adrian Hope. But though Narpat Singh achieved the reputation of "beating back the best-equipped movable column in India", he knew his own weakness and fled during the night.

The most distinguished leader of the rebels in Rohilkhand was Khan Bahadur Khan of Bareilly, mentioned above. Bareilly occupied an important position, and Sir Colin reached the city on May 4. Though surrounded by the enemy in all directions, Khan Bahadur Khan made a brave stand. A fierce battle took place the next day, but though he was defeated, his men gave a good account of themselves. Particularly notable were the two heroic charges, one by a body of "grizzly-bearded Ghazees" armed with sabres, one of whom nearly succeeded in killing Campbell, and the other by a band of white-clad sowars. The latter had attacked the baggage train of the British in the rear, and threw into confusion the

whole body of the camp followers, who fled pell mell in all directions. After six hours' severe fighting the British gained a complete victory and occupied Bareilly the next day (May 6). Khan Bahadur Khan effected his escape with the greater part of his army, and continued his resistance against the English.

While Colin was proceeding against Bareilly, Maulavi Ahmadulla marched with a strong force against Shahjahanpur, which was left in charge of a small detachment. The Maulavi was joined on the way by the Raja of Mohamdi and Mian Sahib, one of the Chiefs of Lakhnau, "each at the head of a considerable body of armed men, most of them mounted." He reached Shahjahanpur on May 3, 1858, with nearly eight thousand cavalry, and found the small English force entrenched within the jail enclosure. For more than a week the Maulavi bombarded the position with his eight guns, but could not capture it. Colin, on hearing the news, sent a force to its relief. The Maulavi disputed its passage across a river, but failed. He was forced to raise the blockade of the British entrenchment, but still remained at large with his force intact, and joined by a large body of rebels from the neighbouring areas, including the Begam, Firoz Shah, and some followers of Nana Sahib. Sir Colin himself marched to Shahjahanpur and defeated the Maulavi, who, however, eluded his grasp, and, nothing daunted, raided another station named Pallee. He had assumed the title of the King of Hindusthan and inspired so much terror by his activities, that the Governor-General offered a reward of fifty thousand Rupees to any one who could arrest him. On June 5, the Maulavi went to Powain on the Awadh-Rohilkhand border, a few miles from Shahjahanpur, but the Raja of this place shut his gate against him. He had a parley with the Raja who stood on the rampart, but unable to win him over, decided to break open the gate. The door was already tottering and creaking, when the Raja's followers fired a volley and shot the Maulavi dead. The Raja immediately cut off his

head and himself carried it on an elephant to the Magistrate of Shahjahanpur, who stuck it up on the Kotwali. Thus ended the career of one of the greatest patriots and leaders of the revolution of 1857, though he was not really regarded as such, either by the contemporary Indians or their successors.

After finishing the campaign in Rohilkhand, Sir Colin Campbell proceeded to the more arduous task of subduing Awadh. There were three distinct categories of rebels, viz., (1) the mutinous sepoys; (2) the troops under the Begam; and (3) the *Talukdars* and Chiefs, and their retainers. The sepoys, however, gradually receded into the background, and the struggle was chiefly maintained by the *Talukdars.* Their spirit of resistance received a stimulus by the Proclamation of Canning, dated March 20, 1858, but actually issued after the fall of Lakhnau, in which they had read their own doom. "That proclamation professed to confiscate the whole proprietary right in the soil of Oudh, save in the case of six comparatively inferior chiefs. To rebel landowners who should at once surrender to the Government, immunity from death and imprisonment was promised, provided only they could show they were guiltless of unprovoked bloodshed."[22]

The effect of this Proclamation could be easily foreseen. Even Sir James Outram, the Chief Commissioner of Awadh, protested against it. "He expressed his conviction that as soon as the proclamation should be made public nearly all the chiefs and Talukdars would retire to their domains and prepare for a desperate resistance. ...They would be converted into relentless enemies if their lands were confiscated, maintaining a guerilla war...but that if their lands were insured to them they would at once aid in restoring order."[23] Canning stuck to his policy, but the prediction of Outram proved to be true. The *Talukdars,* faced with ruin, adopted an attitude of stiff resistance, and some of them fought with heroic courage.

By the end of September, 1858, the relative position of the British and the rebels in Awadh was somewhat as follows. The British "held a belt of country right across the centre of the province, from east to west; while districts north and south of that belt were either held by the rebels or were greatly troubled by them. North of the belt were the Begam (of Awadh), Mammu Khan, Firoz Shah, Hardat Singh, and leaders less notorious, with their followers; south of it were Beni Madho, Hanumant Singh, Harichand, and others, Besides these, in the north-eastern corner of the province, near the Nepal frontier, Nana Sahib and his adherents were believed to rest".[24] It is not possible to describe in detail the prolonged and obstinate resistance offered by them, singly or in groups, and a few examples must suffice. Devi Buksh, the Raja of Gonda, organized the Rajput clans on the left of the Gogra and put up a stiff resistance. A number of clansmen gathered under the able chief, Beni Madho, mentioned above, who, like Tantia Topi, avoided any serious engagement, and adopted the tactics of a guerilla warfare. His followers, numbering about 80,000, chiefly matchlock-men, were scattered over a wide area of which they knew every inch of ground. They made surprise attacks on small units of British troops, wherever they found any opportunity, and retreated before strong enemy forces without offering any battle. By means of these skirmishes they ceaselessly harassed the British troops, but always eluded them, Ghulam Husain, who commanded a rebel force of three thousand men, one-third of whom were trained sepoys, with two guns, threatened Jaunpur. Muhammad Husain fought several times with the British at Amroha and Hariah. Lal Madho Singh hurled defiance at the British from his fort at Amethi, "seven miles in circumference, composed of mud walls and surrounded by a jungle". Another leader named Nizam Ali Khan, with a considerable following, in concert with Ali Khan Mewati, threatened Pilbhit. Then there were Khan Bahadur Khan of Bareilly with about four thousand followers, the

Nawab of Farrukhabad with five thousand, and Wilayat Shah with three thousand, still at large.

The rebel *Talukdars* and Chiefs not only fought with the British, but had to fight against members of their own class. Many of them strongly resented the conduct of the Raja of Powain towards Ahmadulla, related above, and took arms to punish him. But the Raja was saved by their disunion and the timely arrival of the British help. Babu Ramprasad Singh, a *Talukdar* of Saraon, who showed sympathy towards the British, was attacked by a confederate group of rebels, who burned his house, sacked the town, and took him and his family prisoners. Raja Mansingh of Shahgunj in Fyzabad Division, who was at one time believed to be an arch-rebel and put under arrest, had thrown in his lot with the British. For this a large rebel force, 20,000 strong with twenty guns, attacked his fort but dispersed on the arrival of the British.[25]

In spite of determined and heroic resistance, the people or *Talukdars* of Awadh could never hope to succeed against the British, after the latter had practically suppressed the armed rebellion everywhere else. But although many rebel bands were defeated and many *Talukdars* offered their submission, the spirit of the rebellion was as strong as ever, thanks mainly to Canning's Proclamation.

As soon as the cessation of rain, early in October, made military operations practicable, the Awadh Chiefs took the offensive. On October 3, Harichand with six thousand men and eight guns crossed the Gumti and, being joined by several *Zamindars* with an additional force of six thousand men and four guns, arrived within three miles of Sandela. The rebels were, however, defeated in several engagements and both sides suffered heavy casualties. Several other isolated rebel forces were also defeated. These were merely preliminary contests before Sir Colin Campbell, now Lord Clyde, began his regular Awadh campaign. His plan was to encircle the rebel troops by sending columns from the west, south and east, and thus push them towards the Nepal frontier. He wanted to seize

the strongholds of the powerful Chiefs, mostly Rajputs, one by one. Having reduced Rampur Kasia, the headquarters of the Khanpuria clan under Ram Ghulam Singh (November 3, 1858), he attacked Lal Madho Singh, Raja of Amethi. He had protected British fugitives at the beginning of the Mutiny and even personally escorted them to Allahabad. Later, he joined the rebel force. Lord Clyde asked him to submit, but he had no control over the rebel force within his fort. So he stealthily left the fort and presented himself before Lord Clyde (November 10). Some other rebels also followed his example. Far different was, however, the attitude of Beni Madho, the Baiswara Rajput Chief of Shankarpur, who was next attacked by Lord Clyde. Shankarpur, the stronghold of Beni Madho, eight miles in circumference, was besieged by British troops. When asked to surrender, Beni Madho refused to do so, saying that he would evacuate the fort but not surrender his person, as he was a subject of the Nawab of Awadh, and not of the British Government. He actually left the fort with 15,000 followers and several guns. Though pursued by three armies, and defeated in several engagements, he always succeeded in effecting his escape.[26]

But although some of the relel Chiefs eluded his grasp, the campaign of Sir Colin Campbell was a complete success. By winning battle after battle and demolishing fort after fort, he recovered the whole province. An idea of the severity and difficult nature of the campaign would appear from the fact that "1572 forts had to be destroyed, and 714 cannon, excluding those taken in action, were recovered".[27]

"Beni Madho, Devi Baksh, Muhammad Hasan, Mehndi Hasan, Amar Singh, Khan Bahadur Khan, Begam Hazrat Mahal, Mammu Khan, Nana Saheb, Bala Saheb, Jawala Prasad, with other prominent rebel leaders were driven out of their home districts and hemmed in a narrow region on the border of Nepal. It now remained to push them north into the inhospitable land of Jang Bahadur".[28] Lord Clyde pursued Nana Sahib and Begam of Awadh to Bahraich and

other places till they crossed the border and entered Nepal. Many other rebel leaders, before following their example, offered the last fight at Banki, on the banks of the Rapti, on December 30, 1858. After their defeat at Banki, Nawab Tafazzal Husain of Farrukhabad, Mehndi Hasan, and a number of other leading rebel Chiefs with their followers surrendered to the British. Others entered Nepal. Some of them perished in the swamps and hills of the Terai, and some threw away their arms and stole back to their homes. Some, in desperate mood, rushed back into Awadh and were again defeated and forced back into the pestilential hills and jungles of Nepal. Among these were Nana Sahib and his brother Bala Rao. Lord Clyde, with this task accomplished, returned to Lakhnau on January 18, 1859.

It now remains to describe two other principal military operations, not altogether unconnected with those described above. The first is a sort of roving campaign by Kunwar Singh extending over wide areas, while the second is confined to the south of the Ganga and the Yamuna, and concerns chiefly Bundelkhand and neighbouring regions of Central India.

Mention has been made above[29] how Kunwar Singh had to leave his homeland and retire towards Sasaram. After some desultory movements he marched towards the west and passed through Rohtas, Mirzapur, Rewa and Banda. The details of his activities during this long journey are not known with certainty, but it appears that his presence at different localities on the way gave a definite momentum to the revolutionary feelings of the civil population and led to some depredations on their part. The line of his advance shows that he planned to join the revolutionary forces in Central India. From Banda Kunwar proceeded to Kalpi and, according to a previous arrangement, was joined there by the mutinous sepoys from Gwalior. According to the statement of Nishan Singh,[30] an important lieutenant of Kunwar, even 'Nana Rao', meaning probably either Nana

Sahib or his brother Bala Rao, joined this group. The combined troops offered battle at Kandhapur,[31] but were defeated by the superior British force. The subsequent movements of Kunwar Singh are thus described by Nishan Singh: "Then Kunwar Singh fled to Lucknow and he was presented a robe of honour by the Shah of Oudh. The Shah of Oudh also gave a *Firman* for the district of Azamgarh, as well as twelve thousand Rupees in cash for expenses. A cheque (hundi) of Rupees sixteen thousand was also given to be realised from Raja Man Singh". These statements are not corroborated from any other source, but they gain some support from the fact that Kunwar Singh certainly proceeded towards Azamgarh.[32]

About this time the large concentration of British troops at or near Lakhnau had left Eastern Awadh comparatively unguarded, and a strong rebel force, 14,000 strong, including 2500 sepoys, entrenched themselves at Belwas, a fortified camp near the town of Amorha, 9 miles to the east of Fyzabad. The rebel forces consisted of several groups. The most important of these was the one led by Mehndi Hasan, who called himself Nazim of Sultanpur and had under him about fifteen thousand men. His headquarters were at Chanda, 36 miles from Jaunpur on the direct road from that place to Sultanpur. His forces had already fought with the British and suffered reverses at Saraon, 14 miles north of Allahabad, and also at Chanda, which fell into their hands. The Nazim was himself defeated at Sultanpur (February 23, 1858), but escaped with his forces. He was now joined by the Rajas of Gonda and Chardah, several other Chiefs, and about 2500 sepoys of various British regiments. When a British detachment was sent against them, they took the offensive and attacked the British camp on March 5, 1858. After a severe engagement, in which the sepoys fought with great courage and determination, they were defeated and were forced to fall back on their entrenched camp. The British force was unable to storm this position, and a considerable

part of this rebel force marched to the south-east. It was joined by many other rebel groups on the way, till it reached Atraulia, and effected a junction with the troops of Kunwar Singh (March 17 or 18).[33]

Col. Milman, who was encamped near Azamgarh, proceeded against this rebel force, but being defeated by Kunwar Singh, retreated to his camp. But not being able to hold out there, he continued his retreat to Azamgarh, and sent off expresses to Varanasi (Banaras), Allahabad and Lakhnau (Lucknow) for assistance (March 22). On March 26, Kunwar Singh occupied Azamgarh and blockaded the entrenchment of the British troops. These, reinforced from Varanasi and Ghazipur, attempted a sortie on the 27th, but being repulsed, retreated within the entrenchment and remained on the defensive. Lord Canning, who was then at Allahabad, realizing the gravity of the situation, sent a strong force under Lord Mark Keer. On April 6, after a severe engagement, he effected a junction with the British force at Azamgarh. But Kunwar Singh maintained his position till April 15, when further reinforcement of British troops from Lakhnau, consisting of three regiments of European Infantry, seven hundred Sikh Cavalry, and eighteen guns, appeared on the other side of the river Tons which flows by Azamgarh. There was nothing left for Kunwar but to escape, and this he did by a brilliant manoeuvre. Leaving part of his troops to oppose the crossing of the river by the relieving force, he marched with the rest of his troops towards the south. Flying before one column closely pursuing him, and eluding another which was sent to the borders of Bihar to cut off his retreat, he crossed the Ganga at Sheopur with the British troops at his heels. The troops of Kunwar Singh crossed the river two to four miles west of Sheopur, and he arrived with them to his native village Jagdishpur on April 22. Here he was joined by his brother, Amar Singh, who had been hitherto carrying on a guerilla warfare,[34] with several thousands of armed villagers. Next day Kunwar was attacked by a detach-

ment of British troops from Arrah led by Le Grand. Kunwar Singh's troops were posted in a jungle near Jagdishpur, and Le Grand, after some cannonading, ordered a charge by the infantry. But the British were forced to retreat and the retreat was soon converted to a rout. It was a veritable disaster. Two-thirds of the British force, including the commander, were killed, and the rest fled back to Arrah. But this was the last great victory of the old veteran. Three days later Kunwar Singh died at his own house at Jagdishpur. He had been hit by a cannon ball and his right wrist was amputated immediately after his arrival at Jagdishpur. Evidently this brought about the end on 9 May, 1858.

After the death of Kunwar Singh his brother Amar Singh made an attack upon Arrah, but being repulsed continued the guerilla warfare till the end of November, 1858.[35] An important document, recently discovered, supplies very interesting information about the early activities of Amar Singh. It is a statement of a sepoy who had mutinied and was in the service of Amar Singh for six months till his (the sepoy's) arrest on October 25, 1858. "According to his statement Amar Singh had retreated to the hills along with 400 cavalry-men and six guns. These guns were manufactured by a mechanic brought from Calcutta, who stayed with Amar Singh till his arrest. Cannon balls were also manufactured at Jagdishpur out of a huge quantity of lead seized from the English boats on the Ganges. A regular training was also given to the new recruits at Jagdishpur. As to the future intentions of Amar Singh the statement says that he planned to join Nana Rao at Kalpi."[36]

In Bundelkhand, as in Awadh and Rohilkhand, the mutiny of the sepoys was followed by rebellion of Chiefs and people, as mentioned above. The popular outbreaks, however, were not so serious or sustained as in the northern provinces. Among the rebellious Chiefs also, only one, the Rani of Jhansi, played any really important part. But still the situation in Central India was rendered serious to the British

by the fact that it was the scene of operations of the three great military leaders of the Revolt, viz., Tantia Topi, Rani Lakhsmibai of Jhansi, and, though partly, of Kunwar Singh.

There is no evidence to show that the Rani of Jhansi had any hand in the mutiny of sepoys at Jhansi, early in June, 1857. Nevertheless, for reasons that will be discussed later, in Book III, Ch. III, she was forced to take up a definitely hostile attitude towards the British at a later stage. Another chief, the Nawab of Banda, had a similar history.[87] Besides, there were several localities where the mutinous or rebellious spirit continued unchecked for a long time, as the hands of the British Government were too full with more serious outbreaks in the north.

It was not till towards the end of the year 1857 that a regular plan was drawn up for the campaign in Central India. According to this plan, a Bombay column under Sir Hugh Rose, consisting of two brigades, would start from Sehore and Mhow, and proceed by way of Jhansi to Kalpi on the Yamuna ; while another column from Madras, under Whitlock, starting from Jubbulpur, would march across Bundelkhand to Banda. It was intended that these two columns should form part of a general combination, and support each other.

Rose left Mhow on January 6, 1858. He opened the campaign by reducing the fort of Rathgarh and defeating the troops of the rebellious Raja of Banpur who had come to its aid. He then advanced unopposed to Saugor, where "the villagers, who had been mercilessly robbed by the rebels, assembled in thousands to welcome him". After reducing Gurrakotta and a few other forts, which were in possession of mutineers and rebels, he arrived with one brigade before Jhansi on March 21, 1858. The same night, the other brigade under Brigadier Stuart, after capturing Chanderi, joined him.

As soon as the Rani of Jhansi had decided to fight the British, she began to recruit troops, and applied for help to Tantia Topi. The latter, as noted above,[88] had been defeated

at Kanpur on December 6, 1857. He then got orders from the Rao Sahib to proceed to Kalpi and take charge of the small force and magazine left there. On arriving at Kalpi he received orders from the Nana to go and attack Chirkari. After a fight of eleven days he captured Chirkari and took twenty-four guns and three lakhs of Rupees from the Raja. The Rajas of Banpur and Shahgarh, Dewan Despat and Daolat Singh, the Kuchwaya Kharwala, and a great gathering of people joined him there and Tantia organized "the army of the Peshwa", estimated at 20,000 or 25,000 men with 20 or 30 guns.[39] At this time he received an appeal from the Rani of Jhansi to come to her aid. He referred the matter to the Rao Sahib and, with his permission, proceeded to Jhansi.

The garrison of Jhansi comprised about ten thousand Bundelas and Velaities, and fifteen hundred sepoys, while the force under the command of Rose consisted of only two brigades of about two thousand men. Notwithstanding the smallness of his force Rose invested the city and the fort with his cavalry on 22 March and commenced bombarding them with his batteries on the 25th. But, in spite of the heavy bombardment and the incessant galling fire from the British infantry, the besieged, under inspiring guidance of the Rani, offered a gallant resistance. "Their guns never ceased firing except at night. Even women were seen working in the batteries, and distributing ammunition".[40] But in spite of their heroic courage the heavy bombardment battered down the parapets of the mound bastion and silenced its guns on the 29th March, and next day there was a breach in the city wall.

At this critical moment Tantia Topi arrived at the outskirts of Jhansi with 22,000 men, mostly of Gwalior Contingent (March 31). The situation was one of great peril for Rose, but he decided to continue the siege, and fight with Tantia with a portion of his army. By a brilliant manoeuvre, with only fifteen hundred men, he completely defeated the host of

Tantia who fled towards Kalpi (April 1, 1858). Two days later Rose took the city of Jhansi by assault, though it was defended with grim determination till the last. The Rani left the fort with a few attendants on the night of the 4th April, and on the 6th the battle was over.

The Rani joined Tantia at Kalpi, and Rose, leaving a small garrison at Jhansi, marched towards that city. On the way, he was met by the Rani and Tantia at a town called Koonch. Though they were helped by several disaffected chiefs and occupied a very strong position, they were severely defeated by Rose. Tantia went home,[41] and the rest, falling back upon Kalpi, quarrelled among themselves, each section of the army accusing the other for the defeat. The consequent demoralization was so great that as soon as the news reached Kalpi that Rose was marching upon that city, all the rebels dispersed in different directions. At this juncture the Nawab of Banda, who had been defeated by Whitlock, arrived at Kalpi with two thousand horse, some guns, and many followers. With utmost exertions the Rani of Jhansi and the Nawab of Banda succeeded in inducing the sepoys and other rebel groups to return to Kalpi and make a supreme effort to redeem their position. A considerable section of the people in the neighbourhood aided their efforts. Rao Sahib, a nephew of Nana, also was at Kalpi.

The fort of Kalpi was situated on a steep and lofty rock on the southern bank of the Yamuna, protected by chains of ravines on all the three sides other than the river. A line of entrenchments was added to strengthen the fortifications, and, by way of further precautions, the Kalpi Road, by which the British were to advance, was fortified. The Commander-in-Chief, who fully realized the gravity of the situation and the great importance of restoring British authority in Central India which was seriously threatened by the Rani and Tantia, sent a detachment under Maxwell to the aid of Rose. It took up a position on the northern bank of the Yamuna, opposite a village called Golauli. As soon as Rose heard of this, he

marched direct to that village, thereby turning the fortifications on the road. On May 22, Rose was attacked by the rebels, but they were completely defeated. Next day when the British advanced through the ravines to Kalpi, they found that the enemy had fled and the city was almost completely deserted.

Rao Sahib and the Rani of Jhansi fled to Gopalpur, about 46 miles south-west of Gwalior. There they were joined by Tantia Topi. Their position was now desperate in the extreme, but it is only at such a crisis that latent genius sometimes asserts itself. They now conceived the very daring plan of seizing Gwalior by winning over the troops of Sindhia. Which of the three Maratha leaders originally suggested the plan, it is difficult to say. We may leave out of account Rao Sahib, who never distinguished himself in any way, and whose leadership and political importance rested solely on his relationship with Nana. Of the other two, Tantia Topi never claimed the credit, even when he had an opportunity of doing so in the circumstantial account he himself gave of his own military activities. In all probability, therefore, the grand plan was conceived by the Rani of Jhansi.[42] But whoever may be the author of the plan, it was a masterstroke of high strategy. With Gwalior in their hands the rebels would be able to cut off the direct communications of the British in North India with Bombay, while they would have a brilliant opportunity of rallying the whole Maratha country in the south against the British. A British historian has described the idea to be "as original and as daring as that which prompted the memorable seizure of Arcot."[43]

Daring the plan undoubtedly was. The rebels had no resources to carry out the task in the ordinary way. But they counted on the mutinous instincts of the Gwalior army and took the risk. With the shattered remnants of their force the three leaders arrived before Gwalior on May 30, 1858. On June 1, Sindhia marched out with his army to oppose them.

What followed is thus described in official history: "As they (rebels) approached, Sindhia's eight guns opened on them. But the smoke of the discharge had scarcely disappeared when the rebel skirmishers closed to their flanks, and two thousand horsemen, charging at a gallop, carried the guns. Simultaneously with their charge, Sindhia's infantry and cavalry, his bodyguards alone excepted, either joined the rebels or took up a position indicative of their intention not to fight...Sindhia turned and fled, accompanied by a very few of the survivors (of the bodyguards). He did not draw rein till he reached Agra".[44] There can be hardly any doubt that the army of Sindhia was won over by secret negotiations,[45] though we shall probably never know the exact details. The three leaders—Rao Sahib, Rani of Jhansi and Tantia—entered the fort of Gwalior, seized the treasury and the arsenal, and proclaimed Nana Sahib as Peshwa.

The seizure of Gwalior "created a sensation throughout India only equalled by that which was caused by the first mutinies".[46] Sir Hugh Rose regarded his Central Indian campaign as over after the battle of Golauli, and had already issued his farewell order to the troops. But he fully realized the gravity of the situation caused by the fall of Gwalior, and immediately drew up a comprehensive plan to retake that fort and totally exterminate the rebels in that area. He left Kalpi on June 6 and, advancing by forced marches, arrived on the 16th within five miles of the Morar cantonments, near Gwalior, which were guarded by the rebel troops. He immediately attacked them and carried the cantonments by assault. Thus he regained the mastery of the road to Agra, and this enabled the brigade under Smith to reach Kotah-ke-serai, about four miles to the south-east of Gwalior.

We do not possess any reliable account of the activities of the rebel leaders during the fortnight following their capture of Gwalior. The proclamation of Nana as Peshwa was followed by an installation ceremony in which Rao Sahib, richly dressed and wearing the palace jewels, deputised

for him as his viceroy. There were great jubilations, and the feeding of Brahmans and other ceremonies were held with great eclat.[47] It appears, however, that neither Rao Sahib, nor Tantia Topi who took his orders from him as the deputy of Nana, did show much regard for the Rani of Jhansi who, according to some accounts, was deliberately ignored. It is also reported that the newly won Gwalior troops were also similarly ignored, and consequently lost heart in the cause and the leadership of Tantia. Probably, though we do not know it for certain, the Rani alone protested against these ceremonies and wasting time and money which should have been devoted to consolidating their resources against the British attack. But in any case it appears that there was no military preparation to oppose the British forces till they arrived within a few miles of Gwalior, from different directions, and occupied the two strategic positions of Morar and Kotah-ke-serai. According to the account, referred to above, it was not till the very end, when the British troops were almost at their door, that Tantia, finding the soldiers unwilling to follow his lead, made an appeal to the Rani to save the situation.[48] It was, however, too late, but still the Rani again took up the lead and made preparations for the war. She herself led the troops and took up her position on the range of hills between Gwalior and Kotah-ke-serai, which had been occupied by Smith. On 17 June, Smith attacked this force which barred his approach to Gwalior, but met with a stiff resistance. The different versions of this battle slightly vary in matters of detail, but the following account in the British official history may be regarded as fairly correct: "Clad in the attire of a man and mounted on horseback, the Rani of Jhansi might have been seen animating her troops throughout the day. When inch by inch the British troops pressed through the pass, and when reaching its summit Smith ordered the hussars to charge, the Rani of Jhansi boldly fronted the British horsemen. When her comrades failed her, her horse, in spite of her efforts,

carried her along with the others. With them she might have escaped but that her horse, crossing the canal near the (Phulbagh) cantonment, stumbled and fell. A hussar, close upon her track, ignorant of her sex and rank, cut her down. She fell to rise no more."[49] According to another account the Rani was struck by a bullet.[50] Thus died the Rani of Jhansi, and Sir Hugh Rose, the Commander of the British army against which she fought from the beginning to end, paid her a well-deserved tribute when he referred to her as "the best and bravest military leader of the rebels".[51]

Next day, June 18, Rose joined Smith, but it was not till the 19th morning that the main body of troops came out of the Gwalior fort to attack him. Rose immediately attacked them, and after a short but sharp engagement, drove away the rebels and occupied the city.

Next morning, June 20, after making arrangements for the pursuit of the flying rebels, with Tantia among them, Rose attacked the strong fortress and carried it by assault. On that very day Sindhia re entered his capital, and according to official accounts, "the streets through which he passed were thronged by thousands of citizens, who greeted him with enthusiastic acclamations." According to the same accounts, only twenty-one were killed and sixty-six wounded on the British side during the five days' operations before Gwalior.[52]

The pursuing column overtook the flying rebel army at Jowra Alipur on June 22. There was hardly any resistance. "In a few minutes all was over. Between three and four hundred of the rebels were slain; and Tantia Topi and Rao Sahib, leaving all their guns on the field of battle, fled across the Chambal into Rajputana."[53] Passing through the Tonk and Boondi Hills Tantia was overtaken on the Banas river near Kankrauli. But after a short skirmish Tantia fled. Although pursued by several detachments, he crossed the Chambal and marched direct to Jhalrapatan, the capital of a native State. There he levied a "contribution of sixty thousand

pounds on the inhabitants, collected forty thousand more from the Government property, seized thirty guns and enlisted a large number of fresh troops.''[54] In the beginning of September Tantia left the place at the head of nine thousand men for Indore. He was caught by one of the pursuing columns, consisting of only 1300 men, but he fled with his eight thousand, leaving thirty guns behind After being overtaken and managing to escape several times during the next month, Tantia crossed the Narmada about forty miles north-east of Hoshangabad and probably wanted to move south across the Tapti. But being foiled in this attempt, he proceeded westward and re-crossed the Narmada beyond Rajur. Being defeated at Choto Udaipur, he took shelter in the dense forests of Banswara. About this time he heard that Prince Firuz Shah[55] had marched from Awadh to join him. Though Tantia was surrounded on all sides, he rushed out of the jungle through a pass at Partabgarh, in the face of a small British detachment, and joined Firuz Shah at Indargarh. But throughout the pursuit, his followers deserted him in such numbers that the combined army now amounted to only two thousand men, almost in a destitute condition, Even in this condition he evaded the several pursuing detachments by rapidly moving about from the centre of Malwa to the northern extremity of Rajputana. At last, worn out with fatigue and thoroughly disheartened, he crossed the Chambal and hid himself in the jungles near Seronge which belonged to Man Singh, a feudatory of Sindhia. Being deprived of his estate by the latter, Man Singh had rebelled, but was defeated by a British detachment. He was wandering in the forest when he chanced to meet Tantia, and the two became very friendly. As soon as the British Commander came to know of this, he won over Man Singh by holding out the hope of restoring his wealth and position. Man Singh not only surrendered, but led a few sepoys of the British detachment to the hiding place of Tantia Topi. The sepoys found Tantia asleep, seized him, and carried him to the British camp at Sipri. He was tried

by a court martial on April 15, 1859, and was hanged on the 18th in the presence of a large crowd.

The capture of Tantia was the last important act in the suppression of the revolt in Central India. The wonderful guerilla warfare which he had carried on for ten months against enormous odds elicited admiration even from his opponents,[56] and may be looked upon as a fitting end to a struggle which was hopeless almost from the very beginning.

Before concluding this chapter it is but proper to make a reference to the fate of the principal leaders. Among those who surrendered, persons originally belonging to Awadh received a specially favourable treatment. A typical instance may be noted. Mehndi Hasan and the Nawab of Farrukhabad, as mentioned above, surrendered together on the 7th January, 1859. The latter was condemned to death, but his life was spared according to the promise made at the time of his surrender. Mehndi Hasan, who was an official of Awadh before its annexation, was granted a pension of Rs. 200 per mensem, but was not permitted to return home.

Syed Muhammad Hasan, the rebel Nazim of Gorakhpur, refused to submit and take advantage of the Queen's Proclamation, when asked to do so; on the other hand he justified his own conduct on the ground that he fought for religion and his sovereign. Nevertheless, when he was ultimately persuaded to submit, he was granted an allowance of Rs. 200 and directed to live in the District of Sitapur.

The underlying principle seems to be that as Awadh was a very recent annexation, not by conquest, but on grounds whose propriety was doubted by many, an old subject of the king of Awadh who fought against the British was treated as an enemy engaged in legitimate war, rather than as a rebel against his government.

The Begam of Awadh endeavoured to come to an agreement with the British, but failed. On October 22, she sent vakeels to find out the terms she might expect, but the negotiations fell through. To the Queen's Proclamation of

November to which reference will be made later, the Begam issued a reply in the name of her son,[57] in which she referred to many acts of injustice and bad faith on the part of the British Government. In reply to the Queen's assurance that she did not want increase of territory, the Begam asked a very pertinent question: "Why does Her Majesty not restore our country to us when our people wish it?" Warning the people against the offer of amnesty by the Queen, the Awadh Proclamation observed: "No one has ever seen in a dream that the English forgave an offence". After this there was hardly any chance of reconciliation between the Begam and the British.

Nana Sahib also made an attempt to come to terms with the British. In his letter[58] to the British authorities, dated 20 April, 1859, Nana denied his complicity in the mutiny and disclaimed all responsibility for the murder of the British women and children, saying that "they were killed by your sepoys and Budmashes (scoundrels) at the time that my soldiers fled from Kanpur and my brother was wounded".

After referring to the Proclamation issued by the British Government, Nana says: "I have been fighting with you, and, while I live, will fight...You have forgiven the crimes of all... and I alone am left." Nana received a reply and further correspondence followed, but all this led to no settlement. Bala Sahib, who joined his elder brother Nana in his flight to Nepal, also sent a petition to the British authorities. He was less defiant than Nana, and in a way made Nana responsible for his own part in the rebellion. "The sepoys", he said, "would not allow me to leave them, my brother would not permit me to separate from him. I was therefore necessitated to act according to my brother's orders." Bala also mentioned how he saved the life of the daughter of the Judge of Fatehpur.[59] But Bala's cringing attitude was no more helpful than the defiant challenge of Nana, whose last words to the English were: "Life must be given up some day. Why then should I die dishonoured? There will be war between me and

you as long as I have life, whether I be killed or imprisoned or hanged, and whatever I do will be done with the sword only". This spirited challenge to the British is perhaps the only act in Nana's life that would raise his character in the estimation of posterity.

Strangely enough, both Nana and the Begam of Awadh put their faith on the rulers of Nepal even after the latter had actively helped the British in suppressing the revolt, as noted above.[60] But even the piteous appeals (May, 1858) of the ex-king of Awadh to Jang Bahadur bore no fruit, and the latter curtly replied: "As the Hindus and Muhammadans have been guilty of ingratitude and perfidy, neither the Nepal Government nor I can side with them."[61] Nevertheless, being pressed by Lord Clyde on all sides, both Nana and the Begam as well as some rebel leaders were forced to enter Nepal with their parties. Jang Bahadur declared as early as January, 1859, that he would not afford protection or shelter to the refugees from India.

"The Nepal Government employed their troops for the capture and expulsion of their uninvited guests. It was in such an encounter that Beni Madho, Dabir Jang Bahadur, the popular hero of Shankarpur, met with his death. Unwilling to surrender, he fought the Gurkha troops in the Dang valley and died with many of his troops. His brother Jograj Singh was also killed on this occasion. His surviving brother, widow and son were in Nepal till December, 1859. The boy was thirteen or fourteen years of age at the time of his father's death. He was granted an estate with an income of 6,000 rupees per year and was sent to Sitapur for his education. Nawab Mammu Khan, Khan Bahadur Khan and Brigadier Jawala Prasad with others of less note were delivered to the British authorities. Raja Devi Baksh of Gonda, Harprasad, Chakladar of Khairabad, Golab Singh of Biswa died in Nepal under what circumstances we do not know. Hardat Singh of Bundi was killed. Azimullah, Nana's friend, died at Bhutwal some time in October."[62]

But evidently Jang Bahadur of Nepal cherished a sympathetic attitude towards the fugitives of the two princely families of Awadh and Bithur. Birjis Qadr was given shelter at Chitwan.[63] Nana Sahib and his family spent their last days in Nepal. In reply to the request of the British to capture and surrender Nana, Jang Bahadur flatly denied any knowledge of Nana being in Nepal and even sportingly made an offer to the British to send their own men to Nepal to find out the whereabouts of Nana. There is, however, no doubt that both Nana Sahib and Bala Sahib lived and died in Nepal, and it is difficult to believe that Nana could roam at large in Nepal for years, save at the connivance, if not the active help, of the authorities in Nepal. Certain it is that the widows of Baji Rao, Nana, and Bala spent their last days in Nepal. Even the worst tragedy has sometimes a comic phase. It was afforded in the present case by rumours and even official reports, recurring at intervals, throughout the nineteenth and the first quarter of the twentieth century, of Nana being found in India. Several persons were even arrested as Nana and then released. But these created such an excitement that at last the Government of India came to the wise decision that even if the real Nana were found in India, he should be ignored rather than arrested.

FOOTNOTES

1. Holmes, 63,f.n. But Lord Roberts gives the number respectively, as 257,000 and 36,000. (Roberts-II, 434).
2. Holmes, 208.
3. K,II.216-7.
4. K,II.226 ; Holmes, 212-3.
5. *SB*-II, 90.
6. Sen, 155.
7. Sen, 154.
8. Holmes, 221.
9. Ibid, 231.

10. Ibid, 117.

11. Ibid. Lawrence even went so far as to suggest that "the Peshawar Valley should be ceded to the Amir of Afghanistan, in order to allow of the British and Sikh regiments occupying the valley being sent to re-inforce the army before Delhi". The proposal was negatived by Lord Canning. *Sketches*, Vol. I, p. 37.

12. Sen, 82.

13. Ibid.

14. The state of things has been described in detail in Book III, Chapter I.

15. Although the dread of mass conversion to Christianity was an important cause of the Mutiny, the religious question seems to have gradually receded into the background (cf. Ahsanulla's evidence at the trial of Bahadur Shah).

16. Kaye implies (K, III. 645), and Malleson positively asserts, that it was Wilson who guaranteed the King's life. According to the latter, Wilson accorded permission to Hodson to capture the King "solely on the condition that the King should be exposed to neither injury nor insult" (M, II. 75). I have followed Holmes's version (Holmes,384-5).

17. Holmes, 387.

18. See p. 154.

19. Holmes, 294.

20. See p. 135.

21. According to Forbes-Mitchell, there were 70,000 irregular and 60,000 regular mutineers (*Reminiscences*, 195). According to Maude, the number gradually swelled to over 100,000 (*Memories*, II, 449).

22. M.II.409.

23. M,III.251. The Proclamation was also disapproved by Lord Ellenborough, the President of the Board of Control. For the controversy over the Proclamation, cf. H. S. Cunningham, *Earl Canning*, pp. 156 ff.

24. M,III.285.

25. For a detailed account of these *Talukdars* cf. M,II.469; III. 273-88.

26. For details, cf. Sen, 360-1.

27. Holmes, 523,f.n.1. Holmes adds that "the number of armed men, who succumbed in Oudh, was about 150,000 of whom at least 35,000 were sepoys".

28. Sen, 361.

29. See p. 141.

30. This was published in the *Patna University Journal*, No. VIII (1954), and has been summarised in *Freedom—Bihar*, 44 ff.

31. This evidently refers to the battle at Kanpur mentioned above (pp. 161-2).

32. According to *Freedom—Bihar*, pp. 46-7, Kunwar Singh pro-

ceeded to Awadh before the battle of Kanpur in November-December, 1857. But this does not appear to be very likely.

33. M.II.326 ff., 452 ff.

34. For a detailed account, cf. *Freedom—Bihar*, pp. 37 ff.

35. For details, cf. *Freedom—Bihar*, pp. 51 ff. It appears that Amar Singh still maintained the semblance of a parallel government.

36. "Amar Singh was moving from place to place with unflagging energy to keep up the struggle. After the retreat of Nana Saheb into Nepal, he went to the Tarai region to assume the leadership of Nana's troops. But he was ultimately captured about the middle of December, 1859, by a force under Jang Bahadur". He died of dysentery in the Gorakhpur jail on 5 February, 1860. *Freedom—Bihar*, 58-9.

37. For the outbreak at Banda, see above, p.120. According to J. W. Sherer, a contemporary, the Nawab of Banda was practically forced to rebel (*Memories of the Mutiny*, I. 164, quoted in Holmes, 496, f.n).

38. See above, p. 162.

39. *FS*. IV. xcv.

40. Holmes, 511.

41. Tantia says in his statement: "I fled to Chirki which is four miles from Jalaur, and where my parents were." (M.III.518).

42. "Malleson attributes it entirely to the Rani. Holmes does not rule out Tantia, who did not lack either daring or originality. But if Macpherson was right,—and he was supported by Sir Robert Hamilton,—Tantia anticipated the evacuation of Kalpi by a visit to Gwalior. It was he who contacted the Sindhia's troops and their officers and convinced Rao Saheb that Gwalior would fall an easy prey to them" (Sen, 293). Cf. Holmes, 535, f.n. 1.

43. Holmes, 535.

44. M, III. 209.

45. As noted in f. n. 42, Tantia had contacted the troops of Sindhia at Gwalior.

46. Report of Sir Hugh Rose (*FS*, IV. 130).

47. This is the popular account (Cf. Mahasveta Bhattacharya—*Jhansir Rani*, p. 279). But according to Forrest, "the Rao refused to assume any state" and "behaved with considerable tact" (*FM*, III. 265-6)

48. Mahasveta Bhattacharya, op. cit, p. 266. She gives the popular version about the Rani of Jhansi's life at Gwalior (277 ff.) mentioned in this para, but cites no authority.

49. M.III.221.

50. This is the account by Sir Robert Hamilton. For details cf. Sen, 295. The account is corroborated by Munshi Bhawani Prasad, the representative of the Begam of Bhopal with the Political Agent

to the Governor-General in Central India, who was close to the scene of action. He wrote from the Morar Cantonment on 18 June, 1858: "Yesterday, the Rani, of Jhansi and the Nawab of Banda, both present at the entrenchment, were personally directing the bombardment against Major R (Hugh Rose's?) position. During the engagement that ensued one shell from Major R's battery blew off an arm of the Nawab of Banda and another one went off bruising the Rani's breast which resulted in her death". *PIHRC*, XXIX, Part II, p. 158. According to the account given by the Rani's servant, she was drinking *sherbet*, near the Phoolbagh batteries, when the alarm was given that Hussars were approaching. "Forty or fifty of them came up, and the rebels fled, save about fifteen. The Ranee's horse refused to leap the canal when she received a shot in the side, and then a cut on the head, but rode off. She soon after fell dead, and was burnt in a garden close by" (*FM*, III, 281-2). This reconciles the discrepancy between the two accounts of Rani's death given above, and is most probably the correct version.

51. Holmes, 538.

52. *Calcutta Gazette*, January--June, 1859, Supplement, pp. 1-20 (quoted by Holmes, 540-1). Cf. *FS*, IV. 151. Bhawani Prasad, mentioned above in f.n. 50, wrote in the letter, dated 18 June, 1858, from the Morar Cantonment: "Maharaja Scindia came and met the Agent to the Governor-General in Central India at 8 A.M. today. On his arrival a salute of 19 guns was fired in his honour. Hardly anybody had gone to receive him." *PIHRC*, XXIX, Part II, p. 159. Evidently this refers to an earlier visit of Sindhia to the camp *before* the capture of Gwalior.

53. Holmes, 541. The subsequent movement of Tantia, as given in the text, is based on the same authority. For Tantia's own statement, cf. Malleson, III. 518-24, a summary of which is given in Book III, chapter IV.

54. Holmes, 544.

55. See pp. 91, 129.

56. Mal, 397.

57. Sen, 382-4.

58. This letter and the subsequent correspondence are quoted in Book III, Chapter II.

59. For the full text of the letter from Rao Sahib, cf. Sen, 396-7.

60. See pp. 164, 165.

61. Sen, 359.

62. Sen, 368.

63. Ibid.

CHAPTER V

ATROCITIES

An important feature of the great outbreak of 1857 is the perpetration of horrible deeds of cruelty on both sides. Indeed some of the acts were of so brutal a nature, that according to an English historian, "the contest seemed to lie between two savage races, capable of no thought but that, regardless of all justice or mercy, their enemies should be exterminated".[1]

Some English writers, who have the candour to admit that atrocities were committed on both sides, have expressed a wish that a veil should be drawn over them.[1a] But with a few honourable exceptions, the English writers and, following them, others have drawn the veil over the excesses of the British troops, but not over those of the Indian sepoys. As a result, while every school-boy, both in India and England, reads about the cruel massacre of English men, women, and children at Kanpur, very few, outside the circle of historians of modern India, have any knowledge of the massacre, in cold blood, of Indian men, women, and children, hundred times the number of those that perished at Kanpur. Historical truth and political fair-play both demand that the veil should be drawn aside, and an objective study made of the atrocities on both sides.

The first act of cruelty, animated by racial hatred, was the indiscriminate massacre of Englishmen at Mirat, where the people were stirred by one common impulse to slaughter all the Feringhees, sparing neither women nor children. It is alleged that helpless women were butchered without mercy, and children were slaughtered under the very eyes of their mothers. All this was done, not merely by the excited sepoys, but also by the prisoners released by them and the riff-raff of

the population,—the gangs of plunderers and incendiaries who are to be found in every city. The excitement and confusion caused by the mutiny of soldiers were taken advantage of by the unruly elements who are always eager to seize such an opportunity.

When the sepoys of Mirat reached Delhi, the horrible tragedies were repeated there, and a number of English men, women and children were done to death by the sepoys and others in cold blood. Here, too, the scum of the population vied with the sepoys in giving vent to their savage fury, and a number of European residents, who were engaged in mercantile or other peaceful pursuits, were murdered. "Every house, occupied by European or Eurasian, was attacked, and every Christian upon whom hands could be laid was killed. There was no mercy and there was no quarter".[1b] Even when the first fury and excitement had subsided, fifty-two European prisoners,—men, women and children—who were kept in the custody of Ahsanulla, were killed with swords by the sepoys.[2]

Mirat and Delhi set the tempo of the revolt, and indiscriminate massacre of English men, women and children marked the rising, not only of sepoys, but even of the civil population, in many places. The massacre at Jhansi was of particularly heinous type, as noted above[3].

In some cases the tragedies enacted were of a ghastly character. A letter dated from Varanasi on June 16, 1857, describes the following scene witnessed by the writer at Allahabad. "A gang of upwards of two dozen sepoys...cut into two an infant boy of two or three years of age, while playing about his mother: next they hacked into pieces the lady; and while she was crying out of agonising pains for safety...felled, most shockingly and horridly, the husband."[4] Similar incidents happened at Bareilly as reported by a Bengali officer there.[5] Less ghastly, but no less cruel in view of the prolonged agony involved, was the inhuman treatment meted out to some English refugees. A typical instance is furnished by the diabolical conduct of Raja Lonee Singh of

Mythowlee (in Awadh) towards a party of eight English refugees—four men, two women and two children. Five of these had fled from Sitapur. The remaining three were the sole survivors of the refugees from Shajahanpur, the rest of whom were murdered in cold blood on the way by the sepoys who had taken solemn oath not to injure them.

The eight refugees were treated by Lonee Singh in the most heartless manner. On false pretexts they were sent to the jungles where they were forced to live for days together, and had to keep fires burning at night to scare away the tigers and wolves. After inflicting these tortures, Lonee Singh delivered them over to the mutineers. Only the two ladies were spared to tell "one of the saddest of the many tales of suffering in which the history of the Mutiny abounds."[5a]

So far about the cruelty of the Indians towards the English, mostly narrated by the English themselves. We may now turn to the other side of the shield. Unfortunately, the Indians have left no record of the atrocities to which they were subjected, and we might never have known the terrible ordeal through which they passed during those two eventful years. Fortunately for history, however, some Englishmen had sunk so low in the scale of humanity during that awful orgy of murder and rapine, that they not only felt no scruple in proclaiming their own misdeeds, but even took pride in them, as if they had done some heroic and chivalrous acts. Thus we find not only in official records and correspondence, but also in private letters and memoirs, a free and frank recital of the terrible and inhuman acts of cruelty perpetrated by men and officers of the British army.

General Neill, who proceeded from Calcutta in May, 1857, with a regiment, towards Varanasi (Banaras) and Allahabad, has earned undying notoriety for the inhuman cruelties which marked the progress of his army all along the way. It would be too hideous to describe the details, and a general account must suffice. This is given on the authority of Kaye, who had access to all his correspondence and official reports.

Neill gave written instructions to Major Renaud "to attack and destroy all places *en route* close to the road occupied by the enemy." "Certain guilty villages were marked out for destruction, and all the men inhabiting them were to be slaughtered. All sepoys of mutinous regiments not giving a good account of themselves were to be hanged. The town of Fatepur, which had revolted, was to be attacked, and the Pathan quarters destroyed, with all their inhabitants."[6] Renaud "pressed on, proud of his commission, and eager to do the bidding of his chief..... On they marched for three days, leaving everywhere behind them, as they went, traces of retributory power of the English in desolated villages and corpses dangling from the branches of trees."[7]

The above description of Kaye is fully borne out by the following passage in Russel's *"Diary in India."*[8]

"An officer who was attached to Renaud's column told me that the executions of Natives were indiscriminate to the last degree.........In two days forty-two men were hanged on the roadside, and a batch of twelve men were executed because their faces were 'turned the wrong way' when they were met on the march. All the villages in his front were burnt when he halted. These 'severities' could not have been justified by the Cawnpore massacre, because they took place before that diabolical act. The officer in question remonstrated with Renaud, on the ground that if he persisted in this course, he would empty the villages, and render it impossible to supply the army with provisions."

Sherer has described a similar scene along the line of Havelock's march. "Many of the villages had been burnt by the wayside, and human beings there were none to be seen ....the occasional taint in the air from suspended bodies upon which, before our very eyes, the loathsome pig of the country was engaged in feasting."[9]

Referring to the city of Fatepur he writes: "The streets were deserted.........So now our soldiers, English and Sikhs, were let loose upon the place, and before the day was spent

it had been sacked. Next morning, when the column moved on, "the Sikhs were left behind, flushed with delight at the thought that to them had been entrusted the congenial task of setting fire to the town."[10]

On June 9, 1857, the Government of India caused Martial Law to be proclaimed in the Divisions of Varanasi (Banaras) and Allahabad. What followed is thus described by Kaye:

"Martial law had been proclaimed; those terrible acts passed by the Legislative Council in May and June were in full operation; and soldiers and civilians alike were holding Bloody Assize, or slaying natives without any Assize at all, regardless of the sex or age. Afterwards, the thirst for blood grew stronger still. It is on the records of our British Parliament, in papers sent home by the Governor-General of India in Council, that 'the aged, women, and children are sacrificed, as well as those guilty of rebellion." They were not deliberately hanged, but burnt to death in their villages—perhaps now and then accidentally shot. Englishmen did not hesitate to boast, or to record their boasting in writing, that they had 'spared no one' and that "peppering away at niggers" was a very pleasant pastime, "enjoyed amazingly." It has been stated in a book (*Travels of a Hindoo* by Bholanath Chandra) patronised by high class authorities, that for three months eight dead-carts daily went their rounds from sunrise to sunset to take down the corpses which hung at the cross-roads and market places," and that "six thousand beings" had been thus summarily disposed of and launched into eternity."[11]

But even before the Martial Law was passed the English soldiers took the law in their own hands. Referring to their activities Kaye says:

"Already our military officers were hunting down the criminals of all kinds, and hanging them up with as little compunction as though they had been pariah-dogs, or jackals, or vermin of a baser kind. One contemporary writer has recorded that, on the morning after the disarming parade, the first thing he saw from the Mint was a 'row of gallowses.'

A few days afterwards military courts or commissions were sitting daily, and sentencing old and young to be hanged with indiscriminate ferocity...On one occasion, some young boys, who, perhaps in mere sport, had flaunted rebel colours and gone about beating tom-toms, were tried and sentenced to death. One of the officers composing the court, a man unsparing before an enemy under arms, but compassionate, as all brave men are, towards the weak and the helpless, went with tears in his eyes to the Commanding officer, imploring him to remit the sentence passed against these juvenile offenders, but with little effect on the side of mercy. And what was done with some show of formality either of military or of criminal law, was as nothing, I fear, weighed against what was done without any formality at all. Volunteer hanging parties went out into the districts, and amateur executioners were not wanting to the occasion. One gentleman boasted of the numbers he had finished off quite 'in an artistic manner,' with mango-trees for gibbets and elephants for drops, the victims of this wild justice being strung up, as though for pastime, in 'the form of a figure of eight.'"[12]

One of the volunteers in the fort of Allahabad writes thus of the events subsequent to the arrival of Neill with his reinforcements. "When we could once get out of the fort, we were all over the places, cutting down all natives who showed any signs of opposition ; we enjoyed these trips very much. One trip I enjoyed amazingly ; we got on board a steamer with a gun, while the Sikhs and fusiliers marched up to the city. We steamed up throwing shots right and left, till we got up to the bad places, when we went on shore and peppered away with our guns, my old double barrel that I brought out, bringing down several niggers, so thirsty for vengeance was I. We fired the places right and left, and the flames shot up to the heavens as they spread, fanned by the breeze, showing that the day of vengeance had fallen on the treacherous villains. Every day we led expeditions to burn and destroy disaffected villages, and we have taken

our revenge. I have been appointed the chief of a commission for the trial of all natives charged with offences against Government and persons. Day by day we have strung up eight or ten men. We have the power of life in our hands; and assure you we spare not. A very summary trial is all that takes place. The condemned culprit is placed under a tree, with a rope around his neck, on the top of a carriage, and when it is pulled away, off he swings".[13] "The system of burning villages", writes Holmes, "was in many instances fearfully abused. Old men who had done us no harm and helpless women, with sucking infants at their breasts, felt the weight of our vengeance, no less than the vilest malefactors; and as they wandered forth from their blazing huts, they must have cursed us as bitterly as we cursed the murderers of Cawnpore."[14]

The same scene was witnessed in the western part of India. As General Barnard was marching to Delhi towards the end of May, 1857, many cruel deeds were wrought on villagers suspected of complicity in the ill-usage of the fugitives from Delhi.

A contemporary military officer observes:

"Officers now went to courts-martial declaring they would hang the prisoners whether guilty or innocent, and the provost-marshall had his cart waiting for them at the tent-door. Some brought the names of offending villages, and applied to get them destroyed, and plundered on the strength of vague report. The fierceness of the men increased every day, often venting itself upon the camp servants, many of whom ran away. These prisoners, during the few hours between their trial and execution, were unceasingly tormented by the soldiers. They pulled their hair, pricked them with their bayonets, and forced them to eat cow's flesh, while officers stood by approving". The same writer refers to "fierce desire for blood" which "manifested itself on every possible occasion", and remarks that the "slightest whisper

of anything short of indiscriminate vengeance was instantly silenced by twenty voices."[15]

The following may be cited as an example of the manner in which punishment was meted out to the mutineers at Peshawar. The fifty-fifth Regiment at Hoti Mardan in the Panjab was suspected of treason, but had committed no overt act of mutiny. At the advance of an English force they fled towards the hills. Being pursued by Nicholson they turned back and fought bravely. But about 120 were killed and 150 captured. On June 10, 1857, forty of these were brought out, manacled and miserable, to the parade-ground. There, in the presence of the whole garrison of Peshawar and thousands of outsiders, the forty selected malefactors were blown up from the mouth of the guns.

Referring to this Kaye observes:

"It is a significant fact that neither Sir Herbert Edwardes, in his official Peshawur Report, nor Sir Sydney Cotton in his published narrative, says one word about this punishment-parade. And what these brave men, being eye-witnesses of the horror, shrunk from describing, I may well abstain from dwelling on in detail. There is no lack, however, of particulars, all ghastly and some grotesque, in the contemporary letter before me."[16]

As a specimen, reference may be made to the ghastly picture drawn by Mrs. Coopland, a clergyman's widow: "Many prisoners were hanged after the battle, and as it was discovered they did not care for hanging, four were tried and sentenced to be blown from guns; accordingly one day we were startled by hearing a gun go off, with an indescribable horrid muffled sound.........An officer told us it was a most sickening sight.........One gun was overcharged, and the poor wretch was literally blown into atoms, the lookers on being covered with blood and fragments of flesh; the head of one poor wretch fell upon a bystander and hurt him."[17]

Reference may be made in this connection to a series of

letters which a young Lieutenant, Frederick Roberts, afterwards Field Marshal Earl Roberts, the hero of the Afghan War, wrote to his father, mother, and sister in England during the Mutiny, in suppressing which he took a very active part. These letters, later published in the form of a book, throw a lurid light on the mentality of the English officers in India during those dark days. We quote a few extracts without any comment:

"The death that seems to have the most effect is being blown from a gun. It is rather a horrible sight, but in these times we cannot be particular. Drum head Courts-Martial are the order of the day in every station, and had they begun this regime a little earlier, one half of the destruction and mutiny would have been saved.

"The day before yesterday 40 belonging to one Regt. including native officers, etc, were blown away from guns in Peshawar, and this fate awaits many yet I trust."[18]

"In Peshawur, fortunately, firm fellows were at the head of affairs,......At Jullundhur they should, and deserve really to have been all murdered, I mean those in authority...... Brigadier Johnstone would not allow them to fire. Isn't it horrible, Mother dear? Very nearly the whole of one regiment could have been blown to pieces, instead of which they got off and cut off several officers. None died, I believe, but many are badly wounded."[19]

"When a prisoner is brought in, I am the first to call out to have him hanged, knowing that unless the severest measures are adopted we shall have no end to our war, but it does make one melancholy to come across accidents such as I have related (three women watching the dead bodies of their husbands, none of them sepoys). They cannot be avoided I well know. Soldiers get into a town, and cannot be expected to distinguish between the guilty and innocent in the heat of the moment, yet such scenes make one wish that all was settled."[20]

It has been argued in some quarters that the excesses of

According to some eye-witnesses the massacre at the *Ghat* was commenced at a signal given by Tantia Topi. Tantia, in his own statement, says: I went and got ready forty boats, and having caused all the gentlemen, ladies, and children to get into the boats, I started them off to Allahabad ......The Sepoys jumped into the water and commenced a massacre of all the men, women, and children, and set the boats on fire."[24] The signal, which Tantia Topi was seen to give, may be construed, according to his statement, as a signal to start the boats. On the other hand, several witnesses definitely stated that they heard Tantia to give orders for the massacre[25]. Such a categorical statement may justly be looked upon as suspicious.

So far as Nana is concerned, there is no authentic evidence to connect him with the foul treachery[26]. But although his direct participation in this murderous attack is, at best, doubtful, he has been charged with other crimes of a similar nature. In the early days of the attack, an old gentleman, supposed to be a merchant, his wife, and two children, both in their teens, were brought before him and he caused them to be shot on the spot. A like fate was meted out to four clerks found in a house. Later on, on the 10th of June, an English lady, travelling with her four children from the North-West Provinces to Calcutta, while passing through Kanpur, was taken before Nana, and they were all shot. The same fate was dealt out to another lady, who arrived there under similar circumstances on the day following. On the 12th a number of European fugitives from Fategarh, mostly women and children, numbering 126, were coming down in boats to seek refuge in the British cantonment at Kanpur. They were seized and carried to Nana. All the men, with the exception of three, were killed in his presence, and the women and children, along with the other English prisoners, who were taken from the *Sati Chaura Ghat*, were kept in a small house known as 'Bibi Ghar'. All these prisoners,

huddled together, and numbering about 200, were given very coarse food, and their sufferings were intolerable. It has been alleged by some that the women were taken out to grind corn for the Nana's household. Cholera and diarrhoea broke out among them, and some of them fell victims to these diseases.[26a]

On the afternoon of the 15th of July, news reached Kanpur that Havelock's army had crossed the Pandu river and was in full march upon the city. All hopes of saving the city were gone, and then followed the terrible massacre of the women and children in the Bibi Ghar. There were four or five men among the captives. These were brought out and killed. Then a party of sepoys was sent to shoot the women and children through the doors and windows of their prison-house. But they fired at the ceilings of the chambers. So some butchers were called. They went in, with swords or long knives, among the women and children, and slashed them to death. And there the bodies lay, some only half-dead, all through the night. Next morning the dead and the dying were brought out and thrown into an adjacent well. Some of the children were alive, almost unhurt, but they were also thrown into the well.'[27] How far Nana himself was responsible for this foul crime it is difficult to say, and the question will be discussed in Book III, Ch. II.

Altogether some 200 English women and children were hacked to death. It may be mentioned here that although there were reports circulated at the time that some of the women were mutilated or dishonoured, it was found, after very careful investigation, that these stories were false.[28]

As a matter of fact, doubts may justly be entertained regarding the authenticity of the horrid details mentioned above. In this connection, the following remark of George Forrest, made after consulting all available records, is worth remembering. "They show that although the darkest tints predominate, the picture is not so black as it has been painted. As Colonel Williams states, 'The most searching and

earnest inquiries totally disprove the unfounded assertion that at first was so frequently made and so currently believed, that personal indignity and dishonour were offered to our poor suffering countrywomen.' The evidence also proves that the sepoy guard placed over the prisoners refused to murder them. The foul crime was perpetrated by five ruffians of the Nana's guard at the instigation of a courtesan. It is as ungenerous as it is untrue to charge upon a nation that cruel deed."[29]

Kaye has drawn a veil over the terrible retributions that the English soldiery took when they captured Kanpur immediately after the massacre at 'Beebee Ghur.' He merely says: "Most exaggerated stories of this retributory carnage at Kanpur were at one time in circulation. It was stated both in Anglo-Indian and in continental journals that ten thousand of the inhabitants had been killed."[30] It is unnecessary to decribe in detail the terrible atrocities perpetrated upon the people at Kanpur. In view of what Neill had done before the provocation offered by the massacre at Kanpur, it is easier to imagine than to describe them. But one particular mode of punishment deserves to be on record as a proof of his fiendish nature. This is described by Neill himself as follows:

"Whenever a rebel is caught he is immediately tried; and, unless he can prove a defence, he is sentenced to be hanged at once: but the chief rebels, or ringleaders, I make first clean up a certain portion of the pool of blood, still two inches deep, in the shed where the fearful murder and mutilation of women and children took place. To touch blood is most abhorrent to the high-caste natives; they think, by doing so, they doom their souls to perdition. Let them think so. My object is to inflict a fearful punishment for a revolting, cowardly, barbarous deed, and to strike terror into these rebels. The first I caught was a subahdar, or native officer—a high caste Brahmin,—who tried to resist my order to clean up the very blood he had helped to shed; but I made the provost

marshal do his duty; and a few lashes soon made the miscreant accomplish his task. When done, he was taken out and immediately hanged, and after death, buried in a ditch at the roadside."[31]

A worse fate was reserved for another man.

"After this man's identity had been clearly established, and his complicity in directing the massacre proved beyond all doubt, he was compelled, upon his knees, to cleanse up a portion of the blood yet scattered over the fatal yard of the Subada Kothee, and, while yet foul from his sickening task, hung like a dog before the gratified soldiers, one of whom writes:—"The collector who gave the order for the death of the poor ladies, was taken prisoner the day before yesterday, and now hangs from a branch of a tree about 200 yards off the roadside. His death was accidentally a painful one ; for, from carelessness, or perhaps design, the rope was badly adjusted, and when the fellow dropped, the noose closed over his jaw: his hands then got loose, and he caught hold of the rope, and struggled to get free, but two men took hold of his legs, and jerked his body until his neck broke. This seems to me the just reward he should have got on earth for his barbarity."[32]

But Neill did not think that punishment on earth was enough. In order to ensure its continuance in the other world *i.e.* life beyond death, he systematically followed the policy of *burning* all the bodies of Muslims and *burying* those of the Hindus,[33] so that both might be visited with eternal perdition.

Some English writers have sought to condone the excesses of Neill on the plea of provocation caused by the massacre at Kanpur. But they evidently forget that similar plea of provocation might be urged on behalf of those very sepoys who had committed the massacre at Kanpur. For it should be remembered that the home-lands of those sepoys had suffered most from the advancing troops of Neill as noted above. It is refreshing to note that a few English writers

gave an expression to this point of view, as the two following extracts show.

Kaye observes:

"An Englishman is almost suffocated with indignation when he reads that Mrs. Chambers or Miss Jennings was hacked to death by a dusky ruffian; but in native histories, or history being wanting, in native legends and traditions, it may be recorded against our people that mothers and wives and children, with less familiar names, fell miserable victims to the first swoop of English vengeance; [34] and these stories may have as deep a pathos as any that rend our own hearts. It may be, too, that the plea of provocation, which invests the most sanguinary acts of the white man in this deadly struggle with the attributes of righteous retribution, is not wholly to be rejected when urged in extenuation of the worst deeds of those who have never known Christian teaching".[35]

Campbell remarks: "It is difficult to say anything in extenuation of the Cawnpore massacre and the terrible scene at the well, and yet we must remember two things: first, that it was done, not in cold blood, but in the moment of rage and despair when Havelock had beaten the rebel and was coming in; and second, that we had done much to provoke such things by the severities of which our people were guilty as they advanced. At a later time a careful investigation was made into the circumstances of the massacre, and we failed to discover that there was any premeditation, or direction in the matter. Even discounting a good deal of Kaye's general statements of wholesale atrocities on our part, enough remains to make it difficult for us to talk as if the natives only were guilty of deeds of blood. I do not know precisely what happened at Benaras, but I suppose the particular things specifically related by Kaye did happen, besides the bloodshed attending Neill's irruption, and I know that at Allahabad there were far too wholesale executions. Again, apart from Neill's doings, and certainly when a Major was sent on by Neill towards Cawn-

pore, there is no doubt that people were put to death in the most reckless manner. And afterwards Neill did things almost more than the massacre, putting to death with deliberate torture in a way that has never been proved against the natives."[36]

Some idea of the atrocious deeds of the British forces before the Kanpur massacre has been given above. We may now proceed to relate a few of those that took place after that event, and in places far away from Kanpur.

Black as Nana's deeds have been painted, we have no means to determine the motives which impelled him and his personal share in them. We shall never know whether he issued the orders of massacre, and even if he did so, whether, to use Kaye's words, he did it "in rage, or in fear or in the wantonness of bestial cruelty; whether it were believed that the English were advancing only to rescue the prisoners, and would turn back on hearing that they were dead; whether the foul design had its birth in the depths of the Nana's black heart, or was prompted by one still blacker."[37]

But no such doubt can possibly remain in the case of Nana's (?) white counterpart in the Panjab, Frederick Cooper, whose description of his own exploits[38] reveals a fiendish mentality which is rare, or perhaps unique, even among the brutalised military officers of those days. He has given a detailed account of how he dealt with the 26th N. I. against which no charge could be levelled excepting the murder of an officer by a lonely fanatic. Anyone who reads it is bound to feel that Cooper was a veritable devil in human form. Space does not permit to reproduce in full the language in which he gleefully relates and gloats over the sufferings of the mutineers and the diabolical plan he conceived by way of giving a touch of refinement to his cruelty. A few significant passages and events must suffice.

The 26th N. I. which was disarmed on May 3 and stationed under surveillance at Mian Mir, mutinied on 26th July. After a fanatic had killed Major Spencer all the sepoys took

to flight. Weakened and famished after forty miles' march, they tried to cross the Ravi; but 150 of them were shot by the villagers assembled on the bank, and drowned. The rest took refuge in an island and boats with sowars (soldiers) were sent against them.

What follwed is thus described by Cooper.[39]

"The doomed men, with joined palms, crowded down to the shore on the approach of the boats, one side of which bristled with about sixty muskets, besides sundry revolvers and pistols. In utter despair, forty or fifty dashed into the stream and disappeared.........and some sowars being on the point of taking pot-shots at the heads of the swimmers, orders were given not to fire."

The sepoys, being silly folk, therefore thought that Mr. Cooper intended to give them a regular trial. But Cooper had very different ideas. He proceeds:

"They (i. e. the sepoys) evidently were possessed of a sudden and insane idea, that they were going to be tried by court-martial, after some luxurious refreshment. In consequence of which, sixty-six stalwart sepoys submitted to be bound by a single man......and stacked like slaves in a hold into one of the two boats emptied for the purpose." On reaching the shore they were all tightly bound, and fresh batches were brought from the island and treated in the same way. They had then to march six miles to the Police Station at Ujnalla, almost all the road being knee-deep in water. By midnight 282 prisoners were taken to the Police Station. Next morning, August 1, 1857, the prisoners were pinioned, tied together, and brought out thus, in batches of ten, to be shot. They were filled with astonishment and rage when they learned their fate. But Cooper went on with his task. He proceeds:

"About 150 having been thus executed, one of the executioners swooned away (he was the oldest of the firing party), and a little respite was allowed. Then proceeding, the number had arrived at two hundred and thirty-seven, when the district

officer was informed that the remainder refused to come out of the bastion, where they had been imprisoned temporarily, a few hours before......The doors were opened, and, behold! they were nearly all dead! Unconsciously the tragedy of Holwell's Black Hole had been re-enacted...Forty-five bodies, dead from fright, exhaustion, fatigue, heat and partial suffocation, were dragged into light, and consigned, in common with all the other bodies, into one common pit, by the hands of the village sweepers."

There was one sepoy so severely wounded that he could not walk to the place of execution. He was sent to Lahore with some forty-one subsequent captures, and they were all blown away from cannon's mouth.

In Cooper's words, "the 26th were both accounted for and disposed of". He takes great credit for coldly presiding over so memorable an execution, without the excitement of battle, or a sense of individual injury, to imbue the proceedings with the faintest hue of vindictiveness; for he knew that "England expected every man to do his duty."

Cooper had not to wait for the verdict of the posterity about his action. It was praised by the peoples and authorities alike. Thus he observes: "The execution at Ujnalla commenced at day-break, and the stern spectacle was over in a few hours. Thus, within forty-eight hours of the date of the crime, there fell by the law nearly 500 men. All the crowds of assembled natives, to whom the crime was fully explained, considered the act "righteous", but incomplete; because the magistrate did not hurl headlong into the chasm, the rabble of men, women and children, who had fled miserably with the mutineers: they marvelled at the clemency and the justice of the British."[40]

Cooper was congratulated for his action by John Lawrence, the Chief Commissioner for the Panjab. "I congratulate you," he wrote on 2.8.57, "on your success against the 26th N. I. You and your police acted with much energy and spirit, and deserve well of the State."[41] Robert Montgomery, Judicial

Commissioner for the Panjab, also wrote; "All honour to you for what you have done, and right well you did it."[42]

Holmes, the author of the "best history of Sepoy Mutiny" according to V. A. Smith, laments that for his "splendid" work Cooper "was assailed by the hysterical cries of ignorant humanitarians".[43] One of these, Montgomery Martin, observes, with referenc to the statement of Cooper that "within forty-eight hours of the date of the crime, there fell by the law nearly 500 men": "What crime? What law? the reader may ask, demanded the extermination of a helpless multitude, described by the very best authority as unarmed and panic-stricken, famishing with hunger, and exhausted with fatigue?"[44]

Greathed remarks: "The sacrifice of five hundred villainous lives for the murder of two English is a retribution that will be remembered."[45] On this Thompson justly observes: "Yes, it is one of the memories of India, as Cawnpore is of England."

Cooper's narration reaches its climax in these words:

"There is a well at Cawnpore, but there is also one at Ujnalla!"[46] Here Cooper has blurted out a great truth which no one, particularly no Englishman, should forget. Once again Thompson rightly says:

"I see no reason why he should be denied the immortality he craved so earnestly. Let his name be remembered with Nana Sahib's".[47]

It may also be noted that perhaps Cooper may, like Nana, claim originality for the idea of throwing the dead and the dying into a well. For it is doubtful if he had heard of the incidents at Kanpur when he unconsciously imitated them.

But Cooper was by no means an exceptional specimen. A contemporary military officer, writing of the English community in the Panjab at the time, remarks that from the highest to the lowest "everyone talked in the same strain—to 'pott', 'polish off', '*Saf karna*' i.e. make clean or exterminate, a large

bag of pandies, was the desire of every heart. Orders for the execution of deserters or mutineers were written in round terms, and signed with initials.[47a]

We need not recount the horrible tales of atrocities perpetrated by individual officers in numerous localities, because they will fill a volume. We may mention only the devastation and destruction caused in important centres of revolution.

We may begin with Delhi, as we have got more details from contemporary writers of its condition after its recapture by the British troops than that of any other city. Delhi was practically deserted by the inhabitants within a few days of its fall. Large numbers had perished in the hands of the infuriated British soldiers, and most of those who survived left the city, but hundreds of them died of exposure and starvation. Enormous treasures were looted, and each individual soldier amassed a rich booty. Almost every house and shop had been ransacked and plundered after its inmates were killed, irrespective of the fact whether they were actual rebels, or even friends of the British. The General had issued an order to spare women and children, but it was honoured more in breach than in observance. We need hardly wonder at this if we remember the general attitude of even educated Englishmen. 'A gentleman, whose letters, published in the *Bombay Telegraph* afterwards went the round of the Indian and English papers, remarked "that the general's *hookum* regarding the women and children was a mistake" as they were "not human beings, but fiends, or at best wild beasts deserving the death of dogs." He then describes the state of affairs on the 21st of September, i.e. the day after the city was finally and completely occupied by the British troops. "All the city people found within the walls when our troops entered were bayoneted on the spot ; and the number was considerable, as you may suppose, when I tell you that in some houses forty or fifty persons were hiding. These were not mutineers but residents of the city.

who trusted to our well-known mild rule for pardon. I am glad to say they were disappointed."[48]

"I have given up walking about the back streets of Delhi, as yesterday an officer and myself had taken a party of twenty men out patrolling, and we found fourteen women with their throats cut from ear to ear by their own husbands, and laid out in their shawls. We caught a man there who said he saw them killed, for fear they should fall into our hands; and showed us their husbands, who had done the best thing they could afterwards, and killed themselves."[49]

The Bombay correspondent of the *Times* wrote:

"No such scene has been witnessed in the city of Shah Jehan since the day that Nadir Shah, seated in the little mosque in Chandnee Chouk, directed and superintended the massacre of its inhabitants."[50]

Kaye observes:

"Many who had never struck a blow against us—who had tried to follow their peaceful pursuits—and who had been plundered and buffeted by their own armed countrymen, were pierced by our bayonets, or cloven by our sabres, or brained by our muskets or rifles."[51]

G. O. Trevelyan, who was in India, described, shortly after the Mutiny, the wholesale massacre of the Muslim Ghazis in Delhi. He writes: "After the capture of Delhi, every member of a class of religious enthusiasts named Ghazees was hung, as it were, *ex-officio*; and it is to be feared that a vindictive and irresponsible judge, who plumed himself upon having a good eye for a Ghazee, sent to the gallows more than one individual whose guilt consisted in looking as if he belonged to a sect which, probably, was hostile to our religion."[51a]

There was slaughter on a large scale by Brind in revenge of an attack upon a party of Sikhs. Kaye says: Many of the enemy were slain on the spot, and others, "against whom bloodproofs, as also relics of our murdered countrywomen,

children, and other Christian residents" were to be found on their persons or in their houses, were reserved for more humiliating punishments. Following the example set by Neill at Cawnpore, he (Brind) kept these men "to labour in cleansing our polluted lines before their final punishment." The number slain by Brind's detachment ranged from a hundred and fifty to two hundred men. As a pleasant set-off to this, Brind had the satisfaction of reporting that he had "sent out of the city many hundreds of women, children, and helpless male inhabitants—blind and decrepit." It is not clear whether the men thus "slain" were our revolted sepoys or civil inhabitants of Delhi. It does not appear to me, however, that the fact of their having certain articles in their possession was any proof of their having murdered the English people, to whom they had belonged. The goods might have been purchased at a prize-auction, or might have come into their possession by some very innocent accident. It was not the first or last time, when mere possession has been treated as a proof of forcible spoliation attendant on "treacherous murder"[52]

Mrs. Coopland states that within three days of the fall of Delhi the provost-marshal had put to death "between four hundred and five hundred wretches" and was now thinking of resigning his office. "The soldiers, inured to sights of horror, and inveterate against the sepoys, were said to have bribed the executioner to keep them a long time hanging, as they liked to see the criminals dance a "Pandies hornpipe," as they termed the dying struggles of the wretches." Her host, Captain Garstone, went to see the Nawab of Jhujjur executed, and reported that he "was a long time dying."[53]

"When I was at Delhi," says Mrs. Coopland, Sir Theophilus Metcalfe "was busy hunting out, trying, and hanging mutineers and murderers. One day when passing General Penney's house, amongst a guard of sowars, he detected a murderer, and instantly singled him out, tried and condemned him.......One day a native jeweller came to offer his wares to

Mrs. Garstone, who, thinking he charged too much, said, "I will send you to Metcalfe Sahib;" on which the man bolted in such a hurry that he left his treasures behind, and never again showed his face."[54]

Referring to the state of affairs after the fall of Delhi Holmes observes: "The British soldiers showed no mercy to the men. Harmless citizens were shot, clasping their hands for mercy. Trembling old men were cut down."[55]

"The people of Delhi had expiated, many times over, the crimes of the mutineers. Tens of thousands of men, and women, and children were wandering, for no crime, homeless over the country. What they had left behind was lost to them for ever, for the soldiers, going from house to house and from street to street, ferreted out every article of value, and smashed to pieces whatever they could not carry away. A Military Governor had been appointed; but he could do little to restrain the passions of those who surrounded him. Natives were brought forward in batches to be tried by a Military Commission or by Special Commissioners, each one of whom had been invested by the Supreme Government with full powers of life and death. These judges were in no mood to show mercy. Almost all who were tried were condemned; and almost all who were condemned were sentenced to death. A four-square gallows was erected in a conspicuous place in the city: and five or six culprits were hanged every day. English officers used to sit by, puffing at their cigars, and look on at the convulsive struggles of the victims".[56]

Lord Ellenborough declared in Parliament on February 16, 1858:—"It is quite impossible to hope to re-establish civil government in that country if the ordinary proceeding of law is to be the infliction of death."[57]

Sir Syed Ahmad, who went to Delhi in search of his mother, was an eye-witness of the scene of devastation and desolation. Even more than thirty years after the event its horrors were fresh in the minds of the people. Blunt, who visited Delhi in 1883, writes:

"The English soldiers slew and destroyed some thousands of innocent men in revenge for the death of about one hundred. The old Loharo chief assures us 26,000 persons were killed by the soldiers or hanged or shot or blown up during the eight months following the capture of the city. The city was deserted, and whole quarters and suburbs razed to the ground."[58]

Regarding Jhansi, R.M. Martin writes: "On the 4th of April, the fort and remainder of the city were taken possession of by the troops, who, maddened by the recollection of massacre committed there, and by the determined resistance of the people, committed fearful slaughter. No less than 5,000 persons are stated to have perished at Jhansi, or to have been cut down by the "flying camps"...Some flung themselves down wells, or otherwise committed suicide; having first slain their women, sooner than trust them to the mercy of the conquerors. The plunder obtained in the fort and town is said to have been very great. A large number of executions took place daily."[59]

Regarding Lakhnau (Lucknow) Majendie observes:

"At the time of the capture of Lucknow—a season of indiscriminate massacre—such distinction was not made, and the unfortunate who fell into the hands of our troops was made short work of—sepoy or Oude villager, it mattered not,—no questions were asked; his skin was black, and did not that suffice? A piece of rope and the branch of a tree, or a rifle bullet through his brain, soon terminated the poor devil's existence."[60]

Even after the excitement of the battle had subsided the residents of Lakhnau were subjected to all kinds of oppression, including outrage upon women. Russell says (March 24): "The poorer sort of people are returning to the city, but we hear with regret that the women are sometimes ill used and the Hindoos commit suicide when they are dishonoured".[60a]

We find the following minute in the proceedings of the Governor-General in Council, dated 24th December, 1857, regarding the state of affairs throughout the North-West Provinces and the Panjab in the previous July. "The indiscriminate hanging, not only of persons of all shades of guilt, but of those whose guilt was at the least very doubtful, and the general burning and plunder of villages, whereby the innocent as well as the guilty, without regard to age or sex, were indiscriminately punished and in some cases, sacrificed, had deeply exasperated large communities not otherwise hostile to the Government; that the cessation of agriculture, and consequent famine, were impending; that there were sepoys passing through the country, some on leave, others who had gone to their home after the breaking-up of their regiments, having taken no part in the mutiny, but having done their utmost to prevent it; others who had risked their lives in saving their European officers from the sanguinary fury of their comrades; and that all of these men, in the temper that at that time generally prevailed among the English officers and residents throughout the country, and still unhappily prevails in some quarters, were liable to be involved in one common penalty; and lastly, that the proceedings of the officers of Government had given colour to the rumour......that the Government meditated a general bloody persecution of Mohammedans and Hindus".[61]

But the cruelty of the English was not directed only to those against whom there might be any reasonable suspicion. They did not spare even their own servants. Here is the account of an eye-witness:

"The spirit of exasperation which existed against Natives at this time will scarcely be believed in Europe. Servants, a class of men who behaved, on the whole, throughout the mutiny with astonishing fidelity, were treated even by many of the officers with outrageous harshness. The men beat and ill-used them. In the batteries they would make the bheesties

(water-carriers), to whom they showed more kindness than to the rest, sit out of the works to give them water. Many of the unfortunates were killed. The sick syces, grass-cutters, and dooly-bearers, many of whom were wounded in our service, lay for months on the ground, exposed to the sun by day and the cold at night......A general massacre of the inhabitants of Delhi, a large number of whom were known to wish us success, was openly proclaimed. Blood-thirsty boys might be heard recommending that all the Native orderlies, irregulars, and other 'poorbeahs' in our camp should be shot."[62]

Kaye, who quotes this passage, adds that such treatment was only the old normal state of things—unaltered, unrepressed. The same authority observes:

"It is related that, on the absence of tangible enemies, some of our soldiery, who turned out on this occasion, butchered a number of unoffending camp-followers, servants, and others who were huddling together in vague alarm, near the Christian church-yard. No loyalty, no fidelity, no patient good service on the part of these good people could extinguish, for a moment, the fierce hatred which possessed our white soldiers against all who wore the dusky livery of the East."[63]

Abundant evidence is furnished by the Englishmen themselves that everywhere the English officers made an indiscriminate massacre of guilty and innocent alike. Cooper tells us: "Short shrift awaited all captures. The motto of General Nicholson for mutineers was *a la lanterne*."[64]

Mrs. Coopland, a clergyman's widow, refers triumphantly to the achievements of Col. Cotton and his party at Fatepur Sikri:

"They took a great many prisoners, and made them clean out the church; but as it was contrary to their 'cast' they were obliged to do it at the point of the bayonet: some did it with alacrity, thinking they would be spared hanging; but they were mistaken, for they were all hung."[65]

Lieutenant Majendie remarked: "Crime, of course, is a *facon de parler.* It was taken for granted that every sepoy had murdered women and children."[66] In a reminiscent mood he states: "I spent that night on picket at the Musjid above mentioned, much of our time being passed in shooting or hanging prisoners taken during the day......Many a poor wretch breathed his last at this spot, dying, for the most part, with a calmness and courage worthy of a better cause."[67]

Sir George Campbell condemned the "indiscriminate butchery of all the people in arms against the English, whether mutinous sepoys or the inhabitants of Oudh." On this point Majendie observes:

"This to my mind is one of the most melancholy features of the war, that so many comparatively innocent beings should have suffered, as many have done, and that so little distinction should have been made between the cowardly mutineer, red-handed with the slaughter of women and children, and the Oude villager, or 'budmash' who whatever other acts of injustice and rapine he may have committed, and whatever his private character, cannot be said to have been guilty of rebellion, nor had done any of these deeds, but simply taken advantage of a great revolt to strike a blow for his country, which we had taken from him, and who was fighting—whether wisely or not is another question—with at least a show of right upon his side, and in a cause which was not wholly vile......it would have been more satisfactory if for the people of Oude—sepoys excepted—there had been some mercy and quarter."[68]

Russell summarises this question thus:

"Either it was a military mutiny, or it was a rebellion more or less favoured by the people when once the soldiery broke into insurrection. If it was a pure military insurrection, it is most unjust to punish the country people and citizens by fine and hanging for complicity in acts with which they of their own accord had nothing to do; it is also impolitic to

inflict chastisement upon them for not actively resisting armed men, drilled and disciplined by ourselves, and masters for the time of the whole country. We cannot punish sympathies; the attempt is sure to quicken animosities and provoke national deep-rooted antipathy. Let us slay the sepoys in the field, let us destroy our enemies in battle, let us take the life of those murderous traitors who cruelly slew their officers, and hacked to pieces in cold blood women and children. But to punish 'districts' because evil deeds were committed therein, or because bodies of the enemy selected them to encamp and live in, is as unjust as it is unwise."[69]

We may now refer to the views of the great military officers regarding the method of punishing the mutineers. Nicholson, the hero of the Mutiny, "the prototype of the strong, silent, God's Englishman," wrote to Edwardes:

"Let us propose a Bill for the flaying alive, impalement, or burning of the murderers of the women and children at Delhi. The idea of simply hanging the perpetrators of such atrocities is maddening. I wish that I were in that part of the world, that if necessary I might take the law into my own hands."

Nicholson conveniently forgets that his own men murdered more than ten times the number of women and children killed by the Indians. But he proceeds:

"As regards torturing the murderers of the women and children: If it be right otherwise, I do not think we should refrain from it because it is a Native custom. We are told in the Bible that stripes shall be meted out according to faults, and if hanging is sufficient punishment for such wretches, it is also severe for ordinary mutineers. If I had them in my power to-day, and knew that I were to die to-morrow, I would inflict the most excruciating tortures I could think of on them with a perfectly easy conscience."[70]

Nicholson quotes the Bible. How one wishes that while commending the torture of the murderers of women and

children, somebody would have repeated to him the famous admonition of Jesus Christ: "He who is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone at her." But though his proposed Bill for torture was not passed, Nicholson's ideal was translated into practice. Lieut. Majendie, an eye-witness, tells us how Sikhs and Europeans together, after repeatedly bayoneting a wounded prisoner in the face, burnt him alive over a slow fire:

The incident took place at Lakhnau, after the recapture of the city by the British and as a measure of revenge for the death of a British officer of a Sikh regiment. As an instance of the extent to which torture was used even when there was no legislation as proposed by Nicholson, and as a specimen of crime which may be regarded as unique even in the annals of the Mutiny of 1857, the account of Majendie may be quoted in extenso:

"Infuriated beyond measure by the death of their officer, the Sikhs (assisted, I regret to say, by some Englishmen) proceeded to take their revenge on this one wretched man. Seizing him by the two legs, they *attempted to tear him in two*! Failing in this, they dragged him along by the legs, stabbing him in the face with their bayonets as they went. I could see the poor wretch writhing as the blows fell upon him, and could hear his moans as his captors dug the sharp bayonets into his lacerated and trampled body, while his blood, trickling down, dyed the white sand over which he was being dragged. But the worst was yet to come: while still alive, though faint and feeble from his many wounds, he was deliberately placed upon a small fire of dry sticks, which had been improvised for the purpose, and there held down, in spite of his dying struggles, which, becoming weaker and more feeble every moment, were, from their very faintness and futile desperation, cruel to behold. Once during this frightful operation, the wretched victim, maddened by pain, managed to break away from his tormentors, and, already horribly burnt, fled a short distance, but he was immediately

brought back and placed upon the fire, and there held till life was extinct."

"The horrible smell of his burning flesh, as it cracked and blackened in the flames," brought home to the mind of Majendie a train of thought which is sure to find an echo in every human heart: "So in this nineteenth century, with its boasted civilisation and humanity, a human being should lie roasting and consuming to death, while Englishmen and Sikhs, gathered in little knots around, looked calmly on."[71]

Russell, who narrates the same incident, comments: "There were Englishmen looking on, more than one officer saw it. No one offered to interfere !"[71a]

Sir Henry Cotton was told by a military officer that one day his Sikh soldiers requested him to come and see the mutineers who were captured by them. He went and found "these wretched Muhammadans at their last gasp, tied to the ground stripped of their clothing and deeply branded over every part of their bodies from head to foot with red-hot coppers."[72]

Russell observes: "All these kinds of vindictive, unchristian, Indian torture, such as sewing Mahomedans in pig-skins, smearing them with pork-fat before execution, and burning their bodies, and forcing Hindus to defile themselves, are disgraceful."[73]

The cruelties perpetrated during the revolt of 1857-8 and the psychology behind them make painful reading. But they form an essential part of the story and cannot be ignored. It will serve no useful purpose to draw a veil over them. Nor is there any adequate reason why we should refuse to face realities. They have a great lesson for humanity. They prove, if proof were needed, that the much-vaunted culture of the progressive world is only skin-deep,—whether that skin is black or white, belongs to the spiritual East or materialistic West, to the civilised Europe or backward Asia. The century that has elapsed since the memorable event has added fresh

evidence to support this view. Mankind would do well to ponder over this—that only a very thin line demarcates human being from an animal. The atrocities of 1857 should be remembered lest we forget this unpleasant but unescapable truth. Nothing is to be gained by ignoring or suppressing it. There may be some hope for the future if the naked realities of the grim tragedy touch our conscience to the quick and make us strive for a radical change in our outlook.

The tale of atrocities also demonstrates how little one can rely even upon the great English historians of the Mutiny. Thus G. B. Malleson, who superseded Kaye and completed the Official History of the Mutiny, observes:

'I am anxious to say a word or two to disabuse the minds of those who may have been influenced by rumours current at the period as to the nature of the retaliation dealt out to the rebels by the British soldiers in the hour of their triumph. I have examined all those rumours—I have searched out the details attending the storming of Delhi, of Lakhnau, and of Jhansi—and I can emphatically declare that, not only was the retaliation not excessive, it did not exceed the bounds necessary to ensure the safety of the conquerors. But beyond the deaths he inflicted in fair fight, the British soldier perpetrated no unnecessary slaughter."[74]

Malleson wrote this in 1892 when all the facts mentioned in this chapter were published. We must therefore suppose that Malleson either did not care to acquaint himself with all the published facts, or deliberately perverted the truth,—both being very serious blemishes on the part of a historian.

FOOTNOTES

1. *History of England*, by Rev. Dr. Frank Bright, period IV (1893), p. 328.

1a. Ibid.

1b. Mal, 78.

2. Cf. Bk. III. Ch. I.

3. See above, p. 90.
4. Ball, I. 259.
5. BD, 144.
5a. Holmes (1891 Edition), 254-7.
6. K, II. 274.
7. K, II. 284.
8. Pp. 221-2. Quoted in K, II. 284 fn.
9. K, II. 368.
10. Ibid., 369.
11. Ibid., 269.
12. Ibid., 235-6.
13. Ball, I. 257.
14. Holmes, 220-1.
15. *Siege*, 59-60.
16. K, II. 491 fn.
17. Coopland, 233.
18. Roberts—I, 12.
19. Ibid., 12 ff.
20. Ibid., 140.
21. See p. 88.
22. According to Col. G. Williams, who conducted the official inquiry into the Kanpur Mutiny, Nana, being informed of the massacre going on at the *Sati Chaura Ghat*, said that "for the destruction of women and children there was no necessity". Williams heard it from "a man of great influence in the city and a Government official" (Cawnpore Narrative in the Volume *Mutiny Narratives, NWP*, 1857-8).

22a. Kaye does not implicate Nana directly with this massacre—but records that as soon as he got the news of the massacre, he sent orders "that no more women and children should be slain, but that not an Englishman was to be left alive." (K, II. 342). There is no authority for the last ten words.

23. M, III. 515.
24. M, III. 515-6.
25. K, II. 340-41, fn.
26. The evidence of Nanakchand's diary on which Holmes (P. 235) and others rely is hardly worth any serious consideration as will be shown later.

26a. Mal, 169 ; K, II. 353 ff.

27. The account is based on K, II. 372-3. But, as Kaye himself admits, authentic evidence is altogether lacking and some obscurity surrounds this terrible incident (K, II. 372 f.n.). The principal witness, John Fitchell, was 'clearly convicted of direct falsehood'. No reliance

can be placed on Nanakchand as he was a sworn enemy of Nana. While there is no doubt about the massacre, the gruesome details, particularly the role attributed to Nana, rest upon very insufficient evidence.

28. K, II. 373 f.n. Many stories were current that English women both at Kanpur and elsewhere were dishonoured before they were murdered. But most searching inquiry failed to establish the truth of this charge.

29. *FM*, I. xi.

30. K, II. 388 f.n.

31. Ball, I. 390.

32. Ibid., 391.

33. Neill's report—"All the Brahmins will be buried, all the Mahomedans burned." Ms. L. Vol. 726. p. 635.

34. Thompson, who quotes this passage from Kaye, adds: "Kaye is referring to the women and children burnt to death in the villages fired by Neill's column as it advanced on Cawnpore. I have spared the reader an account of these burnings, though eye-witness records are available." (Th. 80).

35. K, II. 270-71.

36. Quoted in *TH*, 80-81.

37. K, II. 371-2.

38. Frederiek Cooper, *The Crisis in the Punjab* (London, 1858).

39. Ibid., 157-64.

40. Ibid., 163.

41. Ibid., 167.

42. Ibid., 168.

43. Holmes, 353.

44. Montgomery Martin, *The Indian Empire*, II. 428.

45. Greathed's letter, quoted in *TH*, 66.

46. Cooper, op. cit., 167.

47. *TH*, 66.

47a. *Siege*, 201.

48. Martin, op. cit., II. 449.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid., 450.

51. K, III. 636.

51a. G. O. Trevelyan, *Cawnpore*, 109.

52. K, III. 637.

53. Coopland, 269.

54. Ibid., 272-3.

55. Holmes, 370.

56. Ibid., 386. Also cf. *Siege*, 280-81.
57. *TH*. 73.
58. Blunt, W. S., *India under Ripon*, 104.
59. Martin, II. 485.
60. Majendie, 195-6.
60a. Russell, Ch. XXII, pp. 211-2. Revised Ed., I. 360.
61. *TH*. 73-4.
62. Chaplain, *Narrative of the Siege of Delhi*, quoted in K, II. 581 and *TH*. 68.
63. K, II. 581.
64. Cooper, 149.
65. Coopland, 243.
66. Majendie, 187.
67. Ibid., 205.
68. *TH*. 56.
69. Russell, Ch. XXXVII, p. 389. Revised Edition, II. 259.
70. *TH*. 43-4.
71. Majendie, 186-7.
71a. Russell, Ch. XIX, p. 178.
72. Sir Henry Cotton, *Indian and Home Memories*, 143.
73. Russell, Ch. XXVII, p. 264. Revised Ed. II. 42-3.
74. Malleson, *The Indian Mutiny of 1857*, 4th edition, pp. 405-6. The book was first published in 1890.

BOOK III

THE HEROES

CHAPTER I

BAHADUR SHAH

At the time of which we are relating, Bahadur Shah, the twenty-second in succession from Babur, the founder of the Mughal Dynasty in India, was the titular king of Delhi, but his power or jurisdiction did not extend beyond the walls of the Red Fort. Still he enjoyed a pension, some prerogatives and privileges, and, above all, the title, though hollow and a mockery, of the Emperor of Hindusthan, as of old. But he was not unaware of the fact that the British Government had decided to curtail these powers and privileges after his death and withdraw the royal title from his successor. It was a source of great mortification to which others were added. He was an old man, and almost completely ruled by his favourite wife Begam Zinnat Mahal. Persuaded by her he decided to nominate her son as his successor, in preference to his other sons, older in age, but the British Government turned down his request and recognised the eldest surviving son of the king as heir-apparent.

But whatever might have been his feelings, he knew that he was helpless. He nourished his grievances within his heart, and was not guilty of any overt act of hostility against the British till the morning of May 11, 1857, when at about eight o'clock, the mutineers from Mirat arrived at Delhi. They made straight for the palace and, standing under the windows, "were now clamouring for admittance, calling upon His Majesty for help, and declaring that they had killed the English at Meerut and had come to fight for the faith."[1] What followed is thus described by Malleson:

"No sooner did the aged king hear the voices of the troopers under his windows than he sent to summon Captain Douglas (Commandant of the Palace Guards) to inquire the meaning of their presence. Captain Douglas pleaded

ignorance, but.........declared he would go down to speak to them, and send them away. The king, apparently ignorant of their purpose, and yet dreading the reason of their presence, begged the young Englishman not to expose his life. The king's physician (Ahsanulla) added his entreaties to those of his master,"[2]

There is a general agreement among historians about the accuracy of the above description, and it is unanimously held that Bahadur Shah was ignorant of the Mutiny till that moment.

A somewhat detailed account of the negotiations between Bahadur Shah and the mutineers is given by Munshi Jiwanlal,[3] who was in Delhi at the time and has preserved an account of the incidents that took place in Delhi from day to day in the form of a diary. Under the date, 11th May, he writes:

"Later on in this day, the two Subahdars, who had been admitted to an audience with the King in the presence of Captain Douglas, were again admitted to a private audience as the representatives of the crowds of soldiery that thronged the neighbourhood of the Palace. They formally tendered the services of the troops to the King. They were directed to take their orders from Hakim Ahsanullah Khan. They sought him out and gave their message. It is said that Ahsanullah looked much perplexed what reply to give. He looked upon the outbreak as a passing thunder-cloud, too black to last long. His reply was: 'You have been long accustomed under the English rule to regular pay. The King has no treasury. How can he pay you?' The officers replied: 'We will bring the revenue of the whole empire to your treasury.' Hakim Ahsanullah then called for a return of the troops who had mutinied. The officer in charge of the King's Palace was sent for. News of the death of some of the officers killed next reached the Palace, followed by the arrival of a regiment of cavalry, who took up a position in the courtyard of the Dewan-i-Khas. Many of the men forcibly intruded into the presence of the King, who was seated in the Dewan-i-

his loyalty to the British. This is proved by the despatch of an express message to the British authorities at Agra about the outbreak of the mutiny,[7] harbouring English fugitives, and helping them to escape, as narrated by Jiwanlal.

The position of Bahadur Shah *vis a vis* the sepoys who had acknowledged him to be their leader and declared him as the Emperor of Hindusthan, and the state of affairs at Delhi under his stewardship, may be best understood from the following extracts of the diary of Munshi Jiwanlal to which reference has been made above. Referring to 12 May, i.e., the day after the arrival of the mutineers from Mirat, he writes:

"All trade in the city ceased entirely, for every shop that was opened was cleared of its contents....All this afternoon the Palace was thronged by a turbulent mob of soldiers, calling out that all the grain-shops were closed and the King's loyal servants were starving. The soldiers demanded of the King that he should pass through the city accompanied by his Army, and personally allay the fears of the citizens and order the people to resume their ordinary occupations. The King yielded, and, mounted on an elephant, passed in procession through the streets. He did personally order the shops to be reopened, and some were opened and again closed; but the shopkeepers generally were deaf to his orders. When the King returned to the Palace, he found the courtyard of the Dewan-i-khas crowded with troopers and their horses. They assailed him with loud cries, complaining that the men of the regiment which had mutinied at Delhi had possessed themselves of the treasure from the Delhi collectorate, intending to keep it, and had refused to share it with the Meerut mutineers. The King, utterly distracted and bewildered in the conflicting counsels, ordered the Princes, who had been appointed to the command of the troops, to send every mutineer out of the city, locating regiments in separate places, and leaving only one regiment in the Palace for the defence of the city, and another on the sands in front of the Palace,

between the fort and the river. The King pointed out to some of the Subahdars present that the Dewan-i-khas had hitherto been an enclosure sacred to Royalty alone, and had never before been forcibly entered by armed men. Another regiment was ordered to hold the Ajmere Gate of the city, a fourth the Delhi Gate, a fifth the Cashmere Gate. These orders were partially carried out....

"Towards evening a number of his native regimental officers came and again represented the difficulty they experienced in getting rations. Forgetful of the lofty tone of the morning's order, and of the high-toned phraseology expressive of the King's dignity, they addressed him with such disrespectful terms as, "I say, you King! I say, you old fellow!" ("Ari, Badshah! Ari Buddha!"). "Listen", cried one, catching him by the hand. "Listen to me," said another, touching the old King's beard. Angered at their behaviour, yet unable to prevent their insolence, he found relief alone in bewailing before his servants his misfortunes and his fate. Again summoned by loud cries from outside the Palace gates, he passed a second time in procession through the city, calling on the shopkeepers to open their shops and resume trade. Throughout this eventful day he was distraught, perplexed, and cowed at finding himself in a position which made him the mere puppet of those who had formerly been only too glad humbly to obey his orders, but who now, taking advantage of the spirit of insubordination which was rife in all classes of the city in this day of ruin and riot, were not ashamed to mock and humiliate him".[8]

The facts, mentioned above, do not support the view that Delhi was a centre of peoples' revolt, or national struggle, or that there was an organized conspiracy to overthrow the British rule. It is not unlikely that we have an exaggerated or partial account and that there were other facts which would induce one to moderate this view. But such facts have not yet come to light. On the other hand, even as a centre of the mutiny of sepoys, the situation in Delhi hardly offers a

pleasant picture. Reference had been made above to the greed of the sepoys which led them to plunder Europeans and Indians alike and caused bitter wranglings among themselves over the share of the loot. Instances are on record where the sepoys, after amassing wealth, returned to their homes to enjoy it without any further thought about the cause for which they fought.[9]

As will be mentioned later, in Book IV, Chapter II, section 3, there was also communal tension, and attempts were made to raise the Muslims against the Hindus. To judge, therefore, from the data so far available, one must admit that there was hardly any combined effort or even unity of purpose between the sepoys and the Hindu and Muslim citizens of Delhi, though it was regarded as the centre of the general revolt against the English. Delhi presented a scene of chaos and confusion, of rapine and plunder, intrigues and dissensions. The sepoys had definitely broken off from the British and burnt their boats. But not so the others. It was but natural that the sepoys would suspect them of loyalty to the British, and it is now known that their suspicions were not unjust or unfounded. Therefore the sepoys harshly treated all—both high and low—in Delhi, and this alienated them and made them wish for the return of the British. The sepoys were rude and insolent to the Emperor and the members of high family because they rightly suspected their loyalty, and this very fact probably increased the royal family's dislike to the mutineers and turned them more and more towards the English for support. There was thus a vicious circle, daily widening the gulf between the sepoys and the civil population. No one seems to have trusted another, and everyone's hand was against his neighbour.

The situation might have been considerably improved if the sepoys could distinguish themselves by some great military achievements. But their performance was hopelessly disappointing, as will be related later. This was due to

several factors other than military skill and courage in which the sepoys were not deficient.

There was organizational difficulty. At first the King appointed Price Mirza Moghul Commander-in-Chief, and conferred high military ranks on other princes. But they proved utterly incompetent and could not keep the sepoys under proper control. Bahadur Shah—it must be said to his credit—honestly tried to do his duty towards the people, though without success. He reprimanded in strong terms, on June 27, both Mirza Moghul, the Commander-in-Chief of the rebel army, and Mirza Khair Sultan, who held the rank of a Colonel, for failure to keep the sepoys in check. "But the princes on whom the King had to depend for maintenance of law and order could not always resist the temptation of helping themselves to other people's property. From an undated petition submitted by two merchants, Jugal Kishore and Sheo Prasad, we learn that vexation and annoyance were caused by the functionaries of the State and the princes, and royal troops still came to plunder their house and threaten to arrest them."[10] On July 1 and 2 the troops of Bareilly, with their Commander, Bakht Khan, arrived at Delhi. As he had a long military experience and belonged to a noble family, the King appointed him Commander-in-Chief in place of Mirza Moghul who was appointed Adjutant General. The other princes holding military ranks were much worse. "On the 4th July, two days after Subadar Bakht Khan had been invested with the office of the Commander-in-Chief, one Ahsan-ul-Huq complained about the dissolute and lawless conduct of Mirza Abu Bakr, the King's grandson; and Mirza Moghul was ordered to recover the looted property. The very next day a more serious complaint was lodged against this prince by no less a person than Imani Begam, a daughter-in-law of the first Bahadur Shah. She represented 'that the night before Abu Bakr, in a state of intoxication, came to her house with several sowars to seize her, and fired several shots with rifles and pistols, and beat a number of

people of the Mohalla. The police arrived, but Abu Bakr attacked the Kotwal with a sword, had him seized and taken away in custody, insulted him, and finally plundered her house.' The King was very indignant. He deprived the offender of his military rank and ordered him to be arrested. But the prince did not find it difficult to evade punishment. The King disgraced the princes and directed them to keep away from his levies. The headmen of the Mohallas were notified that the princes were to be treated like common men if they were found guilty of any lawless action. But it does not appear that royal displeasure had any sobering effect on these wayward youths."[11]

But a mere change of command cold not do much good when the sepoys did not possess even a modicum of military discipline. From the very beginning they showed a spirit of indiscipline to an amazing degree. This is best illustrated by their conduct towards Bahadur Shah and the shop-keepers and other citizens of Delhi as mentioned above. The military officers reported on May 14 that unless food were supplied, the sepoys could not be prevented from plundering.[12] The turbulence and insolence of the sepoys knew no bounds. Within a week they grew tired of Bahadur Shah. Jiwanlal tells us that on May 17 they deposed Bahadur Shah, as he was too old and infirm, and elected prince Abu Bakr in his place.[13] Evidently the issue was not pressed, and Bahadur Shah continued to be the nominal king, daily suffering insults and humiliations from the sepoys.

But the climax of indiscipline and insubordination was reached when they refused to serve under Bakht Khan as Commander-in-Chief, and actually sent a petition to the King to that effect.[14] When an army assumes the power and responsibility of making and unmaking the King, and exercises a veto upon the appointment of their Commander-in-Chief, and when the officers openly plead inability to control their soldiers and save the civil population from their plunder, its chance of gaining success in a prolonged and sustained

struggle may be regarded as negligible. Military history has shown again and again, that valour, courage, heroism and self-sacrifice of individual soldiers cannot make up for the lack of discipline of the army as a whole.

The character of Bahadur Shah, whom the sepoys themselves chose as their leader, was another handicap to their success. The sepoys had come from different and distant regions and had no cohesive force to bind them together. It was necessary to weld them into a compact and organized body and keep up their fighting spirit. All these needed a strong and efficient leader. Bahadur Shah was absolutely unfit for this task. He was advanced in age and almost a dotard, a plaything in the hands of his favourite Begam Zinnat Mahal. He had no administrative experience, nor any knowledge of men and things. He spent his time in composing verses in Urdu and took delight in such peaceful activities. He lacked military knowledge and personal bravery. The following incident recorded by Mainuddin is an interesting commentary on his leadership of the great revolt.

"The mutineers represented to the King that the sepoys were reluctant to attack the English, and demanded his presence in the field. This he promised to give. A large force was ordered to assemble in the evening. The King headed the force and passed by the Delhi Gate, and showed himself to the assembled troops. Passing by the Lal Dighi Tank he went on towards the Lahore Gate. One of the Palace dependants was substituted for the King, who secretly retired to the city by a back way. This show of force ended in nothing. The troops gradually moved back to their own quarters, and the threatened attack ended in smoke."[15]

Not only did he lack any manhood but he was steeped in gross superstitions. The following remarks of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan throw interesting light on this point.

"The ex-King had a fixed idea that he could transform himself into a fly or gnat, and that he could in this guise

convey himself to other countries, and learn what was going on there. Seriously, he firmly believed that he possessed the power of transformation."[16]

All this is fully in keeping with the resolve he once made, out of sheer disgust at the conduct of the sepoys, to leave the world and adopt the life of a Fakir. But the sepoys would not let him go.[17]

We need not, therefore, feel surprised at the following entry in Jiwanlal's diary under the date, May 14.

"The King, distracted and perplexed, shut himself up, refusing audience to all. Both Amin-u-din Khan and Ja-u-din Khan sought to see the King on pressing business, but were refused."[18]

Jiwanlal next refers to the following startling incident on May 16.

"The sepoys assembled early this morning before the Palace, threatening the King and his officers, accusing them of saving the lives of European ladies and gentlemen and concealing them in the Fort, and through them communicating with the Europeans at Meerut....

"I learned today that nearly forty Europeans were concealed in the King's Palace. The sepoys went to the Palace in great anger, as they said they had seized a messenger with a letter cursing the mutineers. The sepoys threatened to kill Ashanullah Khan and Nawab Mahabub Ali Khan, and also threatened to take away Zinnat Mahal Begum Sahiba and keep her as a hostage for the King's loyalty. There was a great uproar in the Palace, the sepoys on the one hand, and the King's household on the other, contending with violent language and harsh vociferations."[19]

Fuller details of the incident are given by Chunilal, the newswriter, in his statement submitted during the trial of Bahadur Shah. This is also written in the form of a diary narrating the events from day to day. Under the date, May 16, he writes:

"The troopers and infantry soldiers, accompanied by their

officers, attended and presented a letter bearing the seals of the physician Ahsan Ulla Khan and Nawab Mahbub Ali Khan, which they said they had intercepted at the Delhi gate of the city, and complained that the physician and the Nawab had sent this letter to the English, inviting them to come into the city immediately, and proposing that provided the English should agree to acknowledge Mirza Jawan Bakht, the son of the King by the Queen Zinnat Mahal, as heir-apparent, they would on their part engage to seize and make over all the soldiery now in Delhi.

"The letter was shown to Ahsan Ulla and Mahbub Ali who declared it to be a forgery. The sepoys however did not believe them and 'drew their swords and surrounded Ahsan Ulla declaring their firm belief that he maintained an understanding with the English.' The King assured the soldiers that he was associated with them in a common cause, desiring them to place every confidence in Ahsan Ulla, Mahbub Ali and Queen Zinnat Mahal. The sepoys pointed out that Ahsan Ulla had in his custody European prisoners and obviously kept them for maintaining friendly relations with the British. They therefore took away from his custody all the 52 European prisoners, men, women and children, and killed them with swords."[20]

"This occurrence," writes Chunilal, "caused a great excitement amongst the Hindus throughout the city, who said that these Purbeahs who had committed this heinous and atrocious cruelty could never be victorious against the English."[21]

Jiwanlal's story about the despatch of an urgent message to Agra by Bahadur Shah, intimating to the Lieutenant-Governor the arrival of the mutineers at Delhi, is also corroborated by Ahsanulla who said in his evidence at the trial of Bahadur Shah:

"I addressed a letter to the Lieutenant-Governor of Agra, on the part of the King, informing him of the arrival of the troops (from Meerut) after they had murdered their Euro-

pean officers, and representing the King's inability to take any measures against them and begging for help in the shape of European troops."[22]

We need hardly feel surprised, therefore, that the sepoys were lacking in discipline and a spirit of loyalty to their nominal leader and King. As noted above, they signified their unwillingness to be commanded by Bakht Khan and even elected Abu Bakr as their King in place of the old King. Ahsanulla represented to the King "that the mutineers were a treacherous, blood-thirsty class, on whom no dependence could be placed."[23]

The picture depicted in these extracts may appear to many to be highly exaggerated and partial, but it is substantially corroborated by the statement of Bahadur Shah during his trial, the contemporary records of the British, and also such Indian evidence as we possess. So far, therefore, as extant evidence goes, Bahadur Shah can hardly claim any credit either for organising the Mutiny, or contributing in any way to its success or failure. On the other hand, we have indisputable evidence that he was unfaithful to the cause of the Mutiny, or the War of Independence, as some would fain call it. Reference has already been made to the secret and express message he had sent to Agra, not only warning the British authorities against the outbreak of Mutiny, but also asking for the help of British troops to put down the mutinous sepoys. Then, after scarcely a month had elapsed since the Mutiny, and less than two weeks after the British forces were encamped on the Ridge before the walls of the city of Delhi,—at the very moment when the sepoys were fighting in his name and shedding their blood for defending the city, he began to intrigue secretly with the British General offering to admit the British troops into the city, secretly through a gate, if they agreed to continue his pension and *status quo*. As this fact has so long remained unknown, I quote below the original records so that the reader may judge for himself the true character of Bahadur Shah, who is now

hailed by many Indians as the great leader of "the First Indian War of Independence." The following extracts are taken from a letter written by General T. Reed, Commander-in-Chief of the British besieging force at Delhi, to Sir John Lawrence, the Chief Commissioner of the Panjab. It may be added that Reed held the post from July 5 to July 17, 1857, when he proceeded on sick leave to Simla.

Extract from a letter dated Delhi, 4th July, 1857, from T. Reed to Lawrence:

"One of our Gomashtas, who was in Delhi, contrived to make his escape yesterday and brought a message from the King that if we would guarantee his life and pension, he would open the gates for us; how far this is to be depended upon remains to be proved; but we have been so busy with their attack upon our rear that there has been no time to consider it; he has evidently been made a tool of and it might stop an immense deal of blood granting his pension for the remaining years of his life which cannot be many.

"The private statement of Futteh Mahomed Gomashta—4th July, 1857, has just been placed in my hands as follows:

"About a fortnight ago Boolakie Doss, a Buneeah and friend of mine, hinted to me that the Hakeem Haissan Oollah Khan wished to come to terms with the British but I did not attend to him as I thought nothing would be done. However he came to me eight days ago and told me the Hakeem was most anxious to see me. Two days after I went to the palace to wait on the Hakeem who took me into a private apartment at the top of a high building; no one was present but the Hakeem, his mooktear Boolakie Doss and myself. The Hakeem at once asked me if I fully understood what he had desired Boolakie Doss to tell me; I said that I did, but that I would not give him much hope of being able to do anything. Then he said that the King was most desirous of making terms with the British and that if a promise (a formal one) were given him

that his pension of 1 lac of Rupees a month and his former position should be secured to him he would have the "Jerdarojah" opened for the admission of the British troops. The "Jerdarojah" is a private entrance into the palace under the Summund Boorj on the river side. The King also offered to arrange to have any other of the city-gates opened at any time the British might wish. A written agreement to assist the British in every way in obtaining possession of the city would be given with the Royal Seal attached. I promised to submit the offer as it was made and make known the answer.

"The substance of this will be sent to you by telegraph today so that you will probably have replied to it before you receive this. Mr. Greathed has also been requested to make it known to the Lieutenant-Governor, N. W. Provinces. If we enter into terms with the King it will be necessary to obtain a material guarantee that his part of the conduct will be faithfully performed. I doubt his (King's) ability to have one of the city gates opened as they are all in the hands of the insurgents whatever may be his power in the palace."[24]

Though the negotiations came to nothing, as Reed correctly anticipated, his letter shows Bahadur Shah in his true colour so far as his attitude to the Mutiny or War of Independence is concerned.

It has been already mentioned above that the sepoys of Delhi suspected some such intrigues and once even threatened to take away Begam Zinnat Mahal and keep her as a hostage for the loyalty of the King. The suspicion of the sepoys is confirmed by, and in a way confirms the truth of, the above extracts. Both receive further corroboration from the published letters of H. H. Greathed, the Commissioner of Mirat, who was appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor of N.W.P. as his political agent at Delhi, attached to the Field-force. The importance of his position would appear from a reference to him in the letter quoted above. The following

extracts from his letters are therefore of great interest for our present purpose:

I. Camp Delhi, August 19.

"I am beginning to get letters from the princes, declaring they have been all along fondly attached to us, and that they only want to know what they can do for us."[25]

II. Camp Delhi, August 23.

"An emissary came out from Zeenut Muhul, the favourite wife of the King, a great political personage, offering to exercise her influence with the King, to bring out some arrangement."[26]

As Greathed did not make any favourable response, the princes approached General Wilson. They offered "to destroy the Bridge and to enlist the services of the Cavalry, and with their aid to put an end to the Infantry, on condition of favour being shown to the Royal Family. General Wilson refused positively "to entertain any communications from the Palace."[27]

Whether the treacherous intrigues of the favourite queen and the sons of Bahadur Shah with the British were independently conceived, or were in continuation of those he had himself begun, it is difficult to say. Perhaps we shall never know the links between the different types of intrigues which probably continued throughout the siege of Delhi, ending with the surrender of the King on agreed terms after the fall of that city. But in any case all the different pieces of information, coming from entirely different sources, so remarkably fit in with one another, that there is hardly any room for doubt that Bahadur Shah and his family betrayed the cause not only of the mutineers, of whom he was the nominal head, but also of the whole country.

Claims have been advanced on behalf of Bahadur Shah that he tried to organise a confederacy of the ruling chiefs of India against the British during the Mutiny. In view of what has been stated above, it appears highly doubtful

whether he was inclined to, or capable of, such an undertaking. Still we must consider the facts and arguments urged in favour of this view.

In the published proceedings of the trial of Bahadur Shah[28] we find a letter addressed to the Chief of Jasalmir (probably a mistake for Jaisalmir). It is dated 11th August, 1857, but "without signature, cypher or seal". It grants permission to the Chief to come to the Royal presence and states that all the English must have been driven away from that State. It also orders the Chief to kill all the Englishmen, if any, who still remain hidden in the State for which the Chief will be rewarded.

The proceedings also contained an order of the King "without signature, cypher and seal", dated 11th August, 1857, and addressed to "all Hindus and Mohammadans who wished the advancement of religion." It refers to the religious war against the infidels and requests the addresees to send to the court accredited agents, money and military help for the slaughter of the Christians. It concludes with the following sentence: "Those who will join in the cause of the faith and religion will receive distinctions and those who will confederate with the Christians will be utterly despoiled of life and property." It gives a list of Chiefs, together with an amount against the name of each which he was to contribute. Another letter addressed to the ruler of Cutch Bhooj, dated 11th August, 1857, is found in the proceedings and is couched more or less in the same terms as the letter written to the Chief of Jaisalmir and, like it, "without signature, cypher or seal."

According to the statement of Ahsanulla Khan these might have been office-copies of letters actually sent to the addressees under proper seal. But we have no evidence that the letters actually reached the Chiefs.

Several authors have referred to a letter which Bahadur Shah is said to have addressed to the Maharajas of Jaipur, Jodhpur, Indore, and Gwalior. It runs as follows: "It is

my inner wish that the British should be expelled from India. It is my great desire that India should achieve independence (from the British). I have not the least desire to rule over India after having expelled the English. I am ready to give up all my royal authority and entrust it to any one of you if all the princes unite and be ready to fight the common enemy."

This letter is quoted by Shri Sunder Lal in his Hindi book, "*Bharat Men Angrazi Raj*" Vol: II, First Edition, pages 1513-14, and it has been reproduced from this book by others. Shri Sunder Lal quotes as his authority the book entitled *Native Narratives* by Sri C. Metcalfe, page 226. This evidently refers to the *Two Native Narratives of the Mutiny in Delhi* by Charles Theophilus Metcalfe, mentioned above, which contains the English translation of the accounts of Mainuddin Hasan Khan and Munshi Jiwanlal, written in Persian. No such letter, however, is actually reproduced on p. 226, or anywhere else, in that book. But on pp. 219-220 of that book we find the following entry in the diary of Jiwanlal, from which long extracts have been quoted above. Under the date, September 4, he writes:

..."Autograph letters were despatched to the Rajas of Jaipur, Jodhpur, Bikanir, and Alore, that the King was in want of troops and was desirous of annihilating the English; but inasmuch as he had no reliable person to organise and administer the very important affairs of the empire at this juncture, he wished to form a Confederacy of States; and if the States he now addressed with these letters would combine for the purpose he would willingly resign the imperial power into their hands."

Some light is thrown on such correspondence from the detailed statement of Hakim Ashanulla, confidential physician to Bahadur Shah, recorded in the proceedings of the trial of the latter.[29]

He says that "Shukkas" were addressed to the following Chiefs at the request of the mutinous troops, calling upon

them (the Chiefs) to come over with their troops and munitions of war.

"Jhajjar, Ballabhgarh, Farrukhnagar, Khan Bahadur Khan of Bareilly, Jaipur, Alwar, Jodhpur, Bikanir, Gwalior, and Baija Bai, and Jaisalmir. Two shukkas were addressed to Baija Bai ; but she replied to neither of them.

"A shukka was addressed to the Patiala Rajah through Bakht Khan. It conveyed the pardon of the King for the Maharaja's fault, at the instance of Abdul Islam, and called upon the Maharajah to supply cash, and to fight against the British.

"A shukka was also addressed to the Jummoo Chief and made over for transmission to Bakht Khan. This person had previously presented to the King a petition (which was believed to have been forged) purporting to have been written by Rajah Gulab Singh, in which the Raja was represented to say that he would soon march to Delhi with his troops, punishing on his way the Maharaja of Patiala; also that the Amir Dost Muhammad Khan was an ally of Jummoo, and would not fail to render service to the King. The shukka to the address of the Jummoo Chief called upon him to proceed with munitions of war to Delhi.

"Replies were received from the Chiefs of Jhajjar, Ballabhgarh, Farrukhnagar and Khan Bahadur Khan of Bareilly, but none were received from Jaipur, Alwar, Jodhpur, Bikanir, Gwalior, Jaisalmir, Patiala or Jummoo.

"These latter Chiefs sent no reply, because they had no inclination to side with the King.

"The Jodhpur and Gwalior Chiefs would appear to be determined to remain staunch in their alliance to the British Government. The mutiny of their troops did not alienate those Chiefs personally from the British.

"No shukka was sent to Bharatpur, because the troops at Delhi said that the Raja was a child, and the administration was carried on there by British Officers.

"The four Chiefs who sent replies professed allegiance to the King and the first two of them sent some troops. But they excused their personal attendance on the ground that their absence would unsettle their countries."

Ahsanulla also gives a list of Chiefs to whom no letter was sent by Bahadur Shah. Among these, particular mention should be made of Kunwar Singh, Nawab of Banda, and Nana Sahib.[30] But so far as Nana is concerned we get some interesting sidelight from the following statement of Ahsanulla: "No petition was received from Nana; but about two months after the breaking out of the mutiny, a confidential agent (a Maratha) of the Nana's arrived at Delhi ......a shukka was addressed to Nana, inviting him over to Delhi."[31] This, if true, definitely precludes the idea of a conspiracy between Nana and Bahadur Shah before or immediately after the Mutiny. There is no doubt that Nana never met Bahadur Shah in response to his invitation mentioned above. It is thus quite clear that even if letters were addressed by Bahadur Shah to some prominent ruling Chiefs, it was done after the outbreak of the mutiny and at the request of the mutinous troops. They do not prove in any way the existence of a conspiracy previous to 1857. The further statement that excepting a few minor local Chiefs in U. P. none of the ruling Chiefs sent any reply is corroborated by the fact that no such letter was found in the palace of Bahadur Shah or in the archives of those Chiefs. There was thus neither any conspiracy before May 1857, nor any organisation of the ruling Chiefs under Bahadur Shah after that date.

It is particularly important to bear in mind that according to Ahsanulla's version Bahadur Shah had no understanding with Nana Sahib, Kunwar Singh and Rani of Jhansi, the three prominent leaders of the Mutiny.

FOOTNOTES

1. K. II. 76.

2. *Mal.* 76.

3. Jiwanlal and Mainuddin, both of whom were in Delhi at this time, wrote accounts of what they saw or heard during those eventful months. These accounts, written in Persian, were translated by C. T. Metcalfe (CTM). The statements of these witnesses are of great historical importance, particularly, as we shall see, that even on certain matters, where it is not easy to ascertain truth, the account of Jiwanlal has been corroborated by other evidences. See f.n. 10 below.

4. *CTM.*, 83.

5. Ibid., 84-5.

6. *Mal.* 84

7. This is admitted by Ahsanulla himself (TB, 252). The fact that Jiwanlal knew this incident, which must have been treated as quite confidential, shows that he had very reliable and important source of information in high quarters.

8. *CTM*, 85-7.

9. Ibid 92.

10. Sen, 85.

11. Ibid, 85-6.

12. *CTM*, 91.

13. Ibid, 95.

14. *TB*, 270.

15. *CTM*, 68-9. Mainuddin Hasan Khan was a Police Officer in Delhi before the Mutiny, and though not disloyal to the English, transferred his service to Bahadur Shah when he was declared King. He was present in Delhi at the outbreak of the Mutiny and during the siege, and on account of his official position had an intimate knowledge of the state of affairs there. See f.n. 3 above.

16. Graham, *Life of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan*, 25. SAK. 4.

17. *TB*, 208-9.

18. *CTM*, 90.

19. Ibid., 93.

20. *TB*. 165-6. Mainuddin also refers to this incident (*CTM*, 59).

21. *TB*, 165-6.

22. Ibid., 252. This disproves Mainuddin's statement (*CTM*. 59) that "some enemy, in order to get Mahbub Ali Khan and Hakim Ahsanullah Khan into trouble, wrote a letter in their names, addressed to the Lieutenant-Governor at Agra, which was allowed to fall into the hands of the mutineers who guarded the gates".

23. *CTM*, 95. 'Hakimulla' in the passage is evidently a mistake for Hakim Ahsanulla.

24. *BPP*, LXXVI, Part I, pp. 47-8 ff.

25. Greathed, 205-6.

26. Ibid., 217

27. Sen, 96.

28. Cf. pp. 70-71.

29. *TB*, 263.

30. Ibid, 264.

31. Ibid, 265.

CHAPTER II

NANA SAHIB

As a result of the Third Maratha War in 1817-18 the Peshwa Baji Rao II lost his dominions and settled at Bithur, near Kanpur, and the British Government granted him a pension, for life, of eight lakhs of Rupees a year. He adopted a son named Dhundu Pant, better known as Nana Sahib. On the death of Baji Rao in 1851, the Government of India permitted Nana Sahib to inherit the savings of Baji Rao and his property at Bithur, but not the pension enjoyed by his adoptive father, or even any portion thereof. Nana Sahib appealed to the Court of Directors and sent a young man in his service, named Azimulla Khan, to London to prosecute his claims. But before he reached London, Nana's appeal had been rejected by the Court of Directors. On his way back Azimulla visited Crimea where a war was going on between Russia and Great Britain, and is said to have gathered the impression that the British military strength was not after all really so great as was generally believed in India. He might have communicated this feeling to Nana, but what effect it produced on the latter it is not definitely known. Nana accepted the decision of the Court of Directors with outward composure and continued his cordial relations with the British officials with whom he came in contact. On April 17, 1857, Mr. Morland, a Judge at Agra, paid a visit to Nana at Bithur. "They talked freely together as friends talk, no suspicion on the one side, and no appearance of anything unwonted on the other. Nana was as profuse as ever in his expression of respect and esteem."[1] It was the confident belief of the Europeans who knew Nana that he had reconciled himself to his present position, and this was fortified by many acts of kindness and hospitality on the part of Nana to the English-

men during the six years that had elapsed since his pension was refused.[2]

Nana had inspired so much confidence in the British officials, both civil and military, that when the mutiny broke out at Mirat, and apprehensions were felt about the fidelity of the local sepoys, the Magistrate, Mr. Hillersdon, expected to suppress the mutiny, if it occurred, with the help of Nana. After consultation with Sir Hugh Wheeler, the Commander of the local forces, Hillersdon asked for the aid of Nana to guard the treasury, which was situated five miles away and contained more than a hundred thousand Pounds in cash. Nana complied with the request and sent a body of his retainers with two guns. According to Shepherd, a contemporary writer, 'Nana Saheb offered his services; his offer was accepted and he came with 500 armed men and two guns'.[3] Mowbray Thomson, one of the four survivors of the Kanpur tragedy, however, categorically states that 'Nana did not volunteer his services, but Mr. Hillersdon, after consultation with Sir Hugh Wheeler, sent over to Bithoor requesting the presence and aid of Nana Saheb; he came instantly attended by his body-guard and engaged to send a force of two hundred cavalry, four hundred infantry, and two guns to protect the revenue.'[4] The retainers, whose number is variously estimated from two hundred to six hundred, posted themselves at Nawabganj which commanded both the treasury and the magazine. According to Tantia Topi's statement,[5] he "went with Nana and about one hundred sepoys and three hundred matchlock-men and two guns to the Collector's house at Kanpur. The Collector...said it was fortunate we had come to his aid, as the sepoys had become disobedient, and that he would apply to the General in our behalf. He did so, and the General wrote to Agra, whence a reply came that arrangements would be made for the pay of our men." This took place on May 22, i.e. twelve days after the mutiny at Mirat, and on the 23rd the British women and children and non-combatants took shelter within an improvised entrenchment. On the whole

the view that Nana's aid was sought for by the British seems to be more probable.

Reference has been made above[6] to the actual outbreak of mutiny late at night on June 4, and how the mutinous sepoys rifled the treasury, marched towards Delhi on the 5th, but returned from Kalyanpur, the first stage of the road, to Kanpur on the 6th.

So far the general course of the mutiny at Kanpur is known with certainty. But the dramatic events that took place on the 5th June at Kalyanpur are shrouded in mystery. Nana is the chief actor in the whole drama, and its different versions reflect the different attitudes entertained towards that hero. There is no dispute about the last act of the drama, namely, that the mutinous sepoys, instead of proceeding to Delhi, returned to Kanpur, on June 6, under the leadership of Nana. But there are differences of opinion on the two vital questions: (1). When and why did Nana join the mutinous troops? and (2). What induced them to return to Kanpur after they had proceeded one march on the road to Delhi?

First, there is the view that Nana had been in secret league with the sepoys long before the Mutiny and offered his help to the British only to betray them later and destroy them all the more easily. As noted above, the highest British officials at Kanpur had no such suspicion at the time, and as will be shown later, the idea was discredited by some British officials even after the Mutiny was over. This view is not supported by any authentic and positive testimony, and rests mainly upon the diary of Nanak Chand and evidence of witnesses who were not improbably in league with him and simply corroborated whatever he recorded. It should be remembered that the evidences were recorded shortly after the recapture of Kanpur by the British when everybody would come forward to save his skin or earn a reward by denouncing the conduct of Nana.

G. W. Forrest, who had to deal with these depositions in his famous collection of official records on the Mutiny, rightly

observes: "There are, it is true, the depositions of sixty-three witnesses, natives and half-castes, taken under the directions of Colonel Williams, Commissioner of Police in the North-Western Provinces, but they are the depositions of men who had, or thought they had, the rope round their neck. Their evidence is full of discrepancies, and must be treated with extreme caution."[7]

As to Nanak Chand, he was himself a base informer and a sworn enemy of Nana for a long time before the outbreak of the Mutiny. It has been proved beyond doubt that his so-called "diary," on which some modern historians have relied, was not a day-to-day record of events, but really an account, put in the present shape, long after the events entered under different dates had occurred.[8]

As regards the character of the man it would be sufficient to state that when his application for a reward was referred to G. E. Lance, Collector of Kanpur, the latter wrote as follows on May 15, 1862: "Nanak Chand was a common informer and had disgusted everyone that has had anything to do with him...I know that the officer (G. W. Sherer, Collector of Kanpur) latterly never admitted him inside his compound. His so-called diary is generally supposed to have brought him in a handsome sum of money as it depended upon what he received whether a person's name was entered as a rebel or well-wisher."[9] Such is the man, on whom Sir George Trevelyan and T. Rice Holmes implicitly relied in giving an account of Nana and the mutiny of sepoys at Kanpur. Sober history cannot, however, place much reliance on what Nanak Chand says, and must dismiss, as quite unproved, the allegation that Nana was in league with the sepoys at Kanpur long before they broke out into mutiny.

Both Shepherd, writing in 1857, and Mowbray Thomson writing in 1859, seem to imply that Nana first joined the mutineers when they reached Nawabganj, where the treasury was situated, and to which place they proceeded directly from the cantonment. It is not a little curious that though both of

them wrote from memory their own personal impressions, the incident is described by them in almost identical words. Thomson writes: "When they reached Nawabgunge the Nana came out to meet them and at their head proceeded to the treasury, where he had all the government elephants laden with public money."[10] Shepherd says: "It is reported that when the mutineers reached Nawabgunge, the Nana came out to receive them, and taking them with him proceeded to the treasury, where he had all the Government elephants well laden with the public money."[11] None of them could have any personal knowledge of the incident, and both relied on hearsay reports, as Shepherd plainly admits. But it seems from the very close agreement, noted above, that both of them probably drew upon an identical written report. There is, however, one significant difference between the two. Both say that Nana distributed a portion of the loot among the mutinous sepoys, but whereas Thomson adds that 'Nana forthwith assumed their command, Shepherd is silent about it, and adds a different account in his book, published long after, as will be shown later.

Not much reliance can therefore be placed on the hearsay evidence of Mowbray Thomson and Shepherd. At the same time it has to be admitted that the reasons which induced Nana to join the mutineers cannot be determined with absolute certainty. We have no evidence of any person, who may be reasonably credited with a knowledge of the truth, save and except Tantia Topi, whose statement on this point runs as follows: "The three regiments of infantry and the Second Light Cavalry surrounded us, and imprisoned the Nana and myself in the Treasury and plundered the Magazine and the Treasury of everything they contained, leaving nothing in either. Of the treasure, the sepoys made over two lacs and eleven thousand rupees to the Nana, keeping their own sentries over it. The Nana was also under charge of these sentries, and the sepoys which were with us joined the rebels. After this the whole army marched from that place, and the

rebels took the Nana Sahib and myself and all our attendants along with them, and said, 'Come along to Delhi.' Having gone three coss from Cawnpore, the Nana said that as the day was far spent, it was far better to halt there then, and to march on the following day. They agreed to this, and halted. In the morning the whole army told him (Nana) to go with them towards Delhi. The Nana refused, and the army then said, 'Come with us to Cawnpore and fight there.' The Nana objected to this, but they would not attend to him. And so, taking him with them as a prisoner, they went towards Cawnpore, and fighting commenced there."[12] The subsequent portion of this account suggests that the position of Nana *vis à vis* the sepoys was not unlike that of Bahadur Shah, and though he was the nominal leader of the sepoys, they did not obey his orders.

As Tantia was a devoted follower of Nana, and himself a rebel against the British, his statement cannot, of course, be taken as unvarnished truth. At the same time it is to be remembered that the statement was a sort of dying declaration, made by Tantia at a time when he had nothing to hope or to fear from the British. He and Nana had committed acts which could never be forgiven or forgotten, and he was in the hands of those whose recent conduct proved beyond doubt that they never forgave nor forgot. So he could not possibly have any motive for hiding his own or Nana's guilt; on the other hand, there was every temptation to create the impression that they fought a patriotic or national war against the hated English which would enshrine their memory in the hearts of their countrymen. So if Nana had taken the lead in the mutiny of sepoys, one would normally expect Tantia to have emphasized, rather than denied, the fact.

It is interesting to note that Tantia's version is supported by Nana's own statement in a petition, dated 20 April, 1859, addressed to Her Majesty the Queen, etc. He says that he "joined the rebels from helplessness" and elucidates it as follows:

"My soldiers were not of my own country, and I previously urged that so insignificant (*gureeb*) a person as myself could render no material aid to the British. But General Wheeler would not listen to me and invited me into the entrenchments. When your army mutinied and proceeded to take possession of the Treasury my soldiers joined them. Upon this I reflected that if I went into the Entrenchments my soldiers would kill my family, and that the British would punish me for the rebellion of my soldiers. It was therefore better for me to die. My ryots were urgent and I was obliged to join the soldiers. Two or three times I petitioned the Sarkar, but no attention was paid to it."[13]

Here, again, one should not ordinarily put much faith in the statement of Nana made in a petition for mercy. There are, however, two considerations which might possibly lead one to think otherwise. In the first place, it agrees with the statement of Tantia Topi, quoted above, made only a few days earlier at a very distant place, after the two had been separated for a pretty long time. Secondly, in course of the correspondence that followed the petition referred to above, Nana repeatedly declared that he would fight till the last and did not fear to die as "life must be given up some day." This makes it highly improbable that he would deny his active participation in the mutiny, if it were true, merely out of fear. Besides, he must have known very well that the British were sure of unearthing evidence in favour of it, if it were a fact, after his surrender.

A somewhat dramatic account of the conversion of Nana is given by Holmes in his narration of the events that took place just before the mutiny broke out. "The mutineers had sent a deputation of their officers to sound the intentions of Nana. Introduced into his presence, the spokesman addressed him in these words: "Maharajah, a kingdom awaits you if you join our enterprise, but death if you side with our enemies." "What have I to do with the British?" replied the Nana, "I am altogether yours." The officers went on to ask

him whether he would lead them to Delhi. He assented, and then, laying his hands upon the head of each, swore that he would observe his promise. The delegates returned to their comrades; and next morning the four regiments marched as far as Kullianpore, on the road to Delhi."[14]

Holmes presumably based this account on Shepherd's later narrative. Dr. Sen, who refers to this incident more briefly, also cites Shepherd as his authority.[15] As Shepherd was in Kanpur at the time, his narrative has carried weight with many. But there are certain circumstances which detract its value. In the first place, as noted above, the incident is not mentioned in Shepherd's account, dated August 29, 1857,[16] i.e. almost immediately after the suppression of the mutiny at Kanpur. It is to be found only in his book published (first in 1862 and again) in 1878 and 1886.[17] Secondly, the whole paragraph containing the incident is put within inverted commas, showing that Shepherd quoted it from some other source whose identity he does not disclose. Thirdly, it is full of contradictions. It begins by saying that Nana, immediately after his arrival at Kanpur from Bithur, "began to tamper with the troops and succeeded in effectually corrupting the fidelity of the 2nd Cavalry and the 1st N. I." As this is hardly consistent with the story of the deputation of the sepoys, it has been added that the deputation was 'prompted', in other words 'stage managed', by Nana's brother and others, though the necessity of any such mock show in that critical moment is not quite evident. Nevertheless, after narrating the incident of the deputation, the writer of the para adds: "Thus it is evident that up to this time there was no understanding come to in regard to attacking general Wheeler, or where would have been the necessity for marching away from the station." The quotation ends here and Shepherd adds that "it was the golundazes of the Oudh battery who represented to Nana" the advantages likely to be derived from attacking the English in their entrenchments at Kanpur. Shepherd then resumes the quotation as follows: "A consultation was then held

between the Nana and his advisers, in which Bala Rao and Azimulla took the lead. The folly of going to Delhi, where everyone of them was likely to lose his individual influence and power was discussed, and it was unanimously agreed that Nana was the proper person to assume the sovereignty in these provinces...". Shepherd then adds: "Accordingly the Nana proceeded to Kullianpore and told the mutineers he would double the amount of pay they received from the British Government if they would agree to stay and fight..."[18] This also hardly fits in with the story of the deputation which had already promised a kingdom to Nana.

Now, neither the story of Nana's tampering with the troops before the Mutiny nor that of the deputation was known to Mowbray Thomson in 1859. As they do not occur in the first account of Shepherd, it is obvious that he himself neither knew nor heard of these incidents up to the end of August, 1857, but later got them from a secondary source, a written account, from which he quoted some passages. There is little doubt that the episode of the deputation originated from the deposition of Kunhye Pershad (Kanai Prasad), a mahajan (trader) of Kanpur, recorded by Lieutenant-Colonel Williams before the end of March, 1859.

After referring to a secret meeting of Nana with some sepoys, Kanai Prasad said: "Two or three days after this the sepoys mutinied. I also heard that some of the Native officers and troopers waited on the Nana with intimation that a kingdom was prepared for him, if he joined them with all his wealth, or death if he sided with the Europeans. The Nana replied that he was with them and had nothing to do with Europeans; he was then requested to lead the troops to Delhi, to which he assented..." Then the witness narrated how Nana assumed the leadership after taking an oath to that effect, was persuaded by Azimulla to give up the idea of going to Delhi, and "with Bala and Azimulla went to Kallianpur and got the troops to return to Kanpur." When asked about his source of information, the witness said he got all this

information from Ramdeen, an attendant of Nana Sahib, by paying him Rs. 20, Rs. 10 each time for the information, which he collected because he feared for his life. But when asked 'what he had to fear from Nana,' he merely said that he was afraid of a Risaldar of Nana, named Jwala Prasad, who bore a grudge against him and confiscated his property after the Mutiny.[19]

The nature of the information supplied by this witness about Nana's intrigue with the sepoys before their mutiny may be judged from the fact that Sheo Charan, who also deposed to it, does not refer to any of the sepoys who, according to Kanai Prasad, met Nana at a ghat on the Ganges. According to Sheo Charan, Tika Singh met Nana three or four days before the Mutiny and told him: "We all, Hindus and Mahomedans, have united for our religions, and the whole Bengal army have become one in purpose—What do you say to it?" The Nana replied, "I also am at the disposal of the army."[20]

The story recorded by Shepherd has been accepted, sometimes with unimportant variations, by many writers. But it cannot be regaded as an authentic story, as it was evidently based on gossips and hearsays, a good many of which, differing radically from one another, were given in deposition before Lt. Colonel Williams. Shepherd's version cannot therefore be given preference to the narrative of Tantia Topi.

Even many contemporary authorities refused to accept Shepherd's story as authentic and pointed out its inconsistency. Thus Sherer, the Magistrate of Kanpur, observes: "Nana was not clearly in league, previously, with the native soldiery, or it would not have been necessary for him to pursue them down the road, and entreat them, with lavish promises, to return." Thornhill, Officiating Commissioner, Allahabad Division, also endorsed the views of Sherer. He remarks: "Had any understanding existed between the Nana and the troops, there would have been no object in the march they made on the Delhi road. It was not until they had gone

that the Nana seems to have finally determined on embarking on an enterprise in which he staked his life on the chance of gaining a throne as the founder of a new Maharatta dynasty." Sherer and Thornhill recorded their views, respectively, in January and April, 1859.[21]

It may be observed that barring the brief statement of Nana and Tantia Topi's more elaborate one, there is no other account which may reasonably be regarded as emanating from a person who was in a position to know the truth regarding Nana's relations with the mutinous troops at Kanpur until he assumed their leadership on 6 June, 1857. Whether Nana or Tantia Topi told the whole truth may justly be doubted, but no one else, whose account has reached us, had any opportunity of knowing the truth. The historian is therefore forced to the conclusion that nothing can be definitely said beyond the fact that on June 5 Nana joined the mutinous troops who returned from Kalyanpur. Whether he yielded to threat or temptation, or was induced by both to place himself at the head of the mutinous troops, will, perhaps, never be known. It is not even certain whether he accompanied the troops to Kalyanpur and, if not, whether he went there in person to induce them to return, or left that task to his agents.

Immediately after the return of the sepoys to Kanpur on June 6, Nana wrote to Wheeler warning him to expect an attack.[22] It was such an unusual procedure in the whole history of the Mutiny as to merit serious attention, and yet no historian has taken the least notice of it. To those who are not obsessed with the idea of Nana's treachery from the very beginning, it may be very reasonably interpreted as the last friendly act of Nana towards the British, by way of previous warning of the changed role he would henceforth be forced to play, so far as his relation with the British was concerned.

The siege of the entrenchment where the British residents at Kanpur had taken refuge, Nana's agreement with the

British authorities and the subsequent tragedy at *Sati Chaura Ghat* have been mentioned above. No impartial student of history can deny that the siege of Kanpur by the sepoys illustrates, to a remarkable degree, the hopeless incompetence and military inefficiency of the sepoys, coupled with a display of criminal instincts which are rare, even in the annals of the Mutiny, only to be matched or perhaps excelled by the later massacre of the prisoners at 'Beebeeghur.' How far Nana was responsible for the tragic incidents at the *Sati Chaura Ghat* has been discussed above.[22a] But since he assumed the leadership of the sepoys, he must share the blame and credit of his followers. In any case, there is nothing in the annals of the long drawn-out siege, nor in the subsequent events, which may, by the remotest stretch of imagination, entitle him to respect either as a general or as a man.

But nothing illustrates his vainglorious character better than the high state he assumed after his "glorious (?) triumph" over the British. He behaved like a conquering hero and, on June 30, proclaimed himself as the Peshwa with all the old pomps and ceremonies. He spent his time in his palace at Bithur with feasts and revels, and issued grandiloquent proclamations "from Painted Garden of the Peshwa." These contained despicable lies and vainglorious boasts which are no less amusing than contemptible. He also issued royal orders to sundry chiefs and officers and regaled them with tales of victory. They were ordered to proclaim by beat of drums in all cities and villages the glad tidings that "all the English at *Poona and in Punna* have been slain and sent to hell, and five thousand English who were at Delhi have been put to the sword by the royal troops."[23]

As a typical example, throwing light on the character and personality of Nana, and giving an idea of the nature of false propaganda to which the leaders stooped, we may quote below the proclamation issued by Nana on July 6, 1857, "from Painted Garden of the Peshwa."

"A traveller, just arrived at Cawnpore from Calcutta, had heard that previous to the distribution of the cartridges, a council had been held for the purpose of depriving the Hindoostanees of their faith and religion. The members of the council came to the decision, since it was a matter affecting religion, it would be right to have seven or eight thousand European soldiers that fifty thousand Hindoostanees might be destroyed, and all (the) rest become Christians. This resolution was sent to Queen Victoria, and received her approval. Again another council was held, at which the English merchants assisted. It was here determined that European force should be made equal to the Hindoostanee army (in number) so that when the contest took place there should be no fear of failure. When this representation (from the council) was read in England thirty-five thousand soldiers were embarked in all haste and despatched to India, and the news of their departure has reached Calcutta. The Sahibs of Calcutta ordered the distribution of the cartridges with the especial object of making Christians of the Native Army, so that when the Army became Christians there would be no delay in making Christians of the ryots. The cartridges were rubbed over the fat of pigs and cows. The fact has been asserted by the Bengalees who were employed in the manufacture of the cartridges, and of those who related this, one has been executed and all the rest put into confinement. They (the Sahibs) made their arrangements here. This is the news from thence (Europe). The Turkish Ambassador wrote from London to the Sultan to inform him that thirty-five thousand men have been despatched to Hindoostan for the purpose of making Christians of the Hindoostanees. The Sultan of Room—may God perpetuate his sovereignty!—despatched a Firman to the Pasha of Egypt to this effect; 'You are an ally of Queen Victoria. But this is not the season for amity, inasmuch as my Ambassador writes that thirty-five thousand soldiers have been despatched to Hindoostan for the purpose of making Christians of the Native ryots and troops. There-

fore, in this case, whilst a remedy is in my power, if I should be negligent, how shall I show my face to God? And this day (i.e. conjuncture) may some time or other be my own (meaning this may some day be his own case) since, if the English make the Hindoostanees Christians, they will make an attempt on my dominions'.

"When the Pasha of Egypt received this Firman, he, previous to the arrival of the (English) force, assembled and organised his troops at Alexandria, which is on the road to Hindoostan. The moment the soldiers (English) appeared, the Pasha's troops opened an artillery fire upon them from all sides, and destroyed and sunk their ships, so that not a single soldier escaped.

"When the English at Calcutta had issued their order for the distribution of the cartridges, and the disturbances had arisen, they anxiously looked out for the troops from London to aid them. But the Almighty, in his perfect omnipotence, had already disposed of these. When the news of the slaughter of the army from London became known, the Governor-General was greatly afflicted and distressed, and *thumped his head*".[24]

While Nana was enjoying himself in his palace at Bithur with feasts and revels, and issuing grandiloquent proclamations about the extermination of the English, Havelock was advancing with an army for the relief of Kanpur. The military inefficiency of Nana and his sepoys was as manifest in their opposition to the advancing British troops as during the siege of Kanpur. His army chose an excellent position on the banks of the river Pandu-nadi, 23 miles from Kanpur. But with an incredible folly they did not destroy the bridge which spanned the river. The British army, on the other hand, after defeating the enemy at the village of Aong on the morning of July 15, and a five hours' march under the sun, had reached within six miles of this unfordable river. But as soon as Havelock heard that the enemy troops had gathered in great strength on the banks of this unfordable river, he

immediately resumed his march. On reaching the river the British troops "charged over the bridge, captured the enemy's guns and forced them to retreat towards Kanpur."

It is held by the British historians, that Nana, alarmed by this news, perpetrated the horrible massacre of the British prisoners—men, women, and children—which has been described above.[24a] The motive of this massacre is believed to be twofold: First, to remove all evidence against those who had taken part in the massacre at the river side; and secondly, the hope that the British forces who were coming to rescue the prisoners might go back when they learnt that they were too late for that purpose. It is difficult to believe that such childish arguments could weigh with a man endowed even with an ordinary degree of reason and common sense. It is only fair to recognize that there is no reliable evidence to implicate Nana in this foul crime. In his letter to the Queen, referred to later, he disclaims all responsibility for the murder of English women and children and says that "they were killed by your Sepoys and Budmushes at the time that my soldiers fled from Kanpur and my brother was wounded." Though this is not of much value, the evidence against him of men like Nanakchand is of equally little worth. According to Sherer, a contemporary high British official at Kanpur, there is no trace of Nana's individual influence in the affair'. Until more definite evidence against Nana is available, he must be given the benefit of doubt so far as any direct responsibility for the crime is concerned.[25]

After this nefarious deed Nana marched out with five thousand men and chose a very strong and strategic position on the Grand Trunk Road, about seven miles from Kanpur. But Havelock, after a brilliant display of strategy and courage, completely defeated Nana's troops. Nana rallied his troops and made a heroic stand, planting a gun in the middle of the road which created great havoc upon the advancing British troops. But again the superior dash and courage of the British men and officers carried everything

before them, and the sepoys rushed in head-long flight from the battlefield (July 16). It culminated in a veritable rout, and Nana's troops melted away in no time. Nana himself rode straight to Bithur and fled with his family to the other side of the Ganga. It is reported that he covered his flight by declaring to his followers that he was going to commit suicide by drowning himself in that sacred river.[26] The truth of this report, however, cannot be verified.

But Nana did not lose all hope, and carried on a desultory struggle for some time. He collected a force and harassed the rear of the army of Havelock during his march towards Lakhnau from Kanpur (July 30). But the real initiative now passed to Tantia Topi, who henceforth acted in his name. Nana was with Tantia, and probably commanded a part of his troops which defeated the British force under Windham and seized Kanpur [27] But after his defeat and flight from Kanpur on December 6, 1857, there is no definite trace of Nana's activities. Tantia Topi says in his statement that he acted under the orders of Nana, and gives some accounts of his fighting during this period.[28] But some time later it appears that Rao Sahib, a nephew of Nana, was appointed by the latter as his representative, and it was this Rao Sahib (and occasionally also Nana's brother Bala Sahib) who henceforth accompanied Tantia in his campaigns. Tantia took his orders from Rao Sahib and, after the capture of Gwalior, this Rao Sahib was formally enthroned as the Deputy Peshwa with due pomp and ceremony. Tantia does not make any further reference to the personal activities, of Nana, though he professed to fight for his cause and used his name as the rallying cry throughout his campaign. Early in 1859 Nana fled to Nepal and wrote a defiant letter to Hope Grant who was in charge of the military campaign in Avadh. "He abused the Government of the Company, and asked what right the British had to be in India, and to declare him an outlaw."[29] We need not pursue his career any further, for there is no doubt that with his flight to Nepal he passed out of the history

of the Mutiny, or by whatever name it might be called. His subsequent wanderings, perhaps for a good many years, in the wild forests and hills of Nepal, are of no interest to the students of the history of the great outbreak, however they might excite the pity, or supply material for a romantic tragedy.

Perhaps no other leading figure in the great outbreak of 1857 has evoked such diametrically opposite criticism as Nana Sahib. He has been viewed by some as a great leader and patriot who planned and organized the great rebellion, or as some would put it, the First War of Independence ; and by others as the worst scoundrel and a traitor perpetrating the most horrible deed of cruelty. One of the most important sources of information, which is very revealing and throws an altogether new light on his career and personality, was however, not considered in forming an estimate of Nana. This consists of a number of letters written by him and preserved in the National Archives, Delhi, but of which no notice was taken by anybody before the publication of the first edition of this book. Reference may be made here to only a few of them. Though some passages from these letters have been quoted above, they would bear repetition.

The first is a letter from Nana to Her Majesty the Queen, the Parliament, the Court of Directors, Governor-General, Governor and all officers, Government and Military, 20 April, 1859 (Foreign Department Political Proceedings, 63—70, 27 May, 1859). It begins thus:

"You have forgiven the crimes of all Hindostan and murders have been pardoned. It is strange your Sepoys have killed your women and children and Mummoo Khan and the people of rank of Furruckabad, who truly are murderers, have been forgiven, and you have written to Jay Bahadur to send the Begum and the Rajahs to their own country under his guarantee. It is surprising that I who have joined the rebels from helplessness have not been forgiven. I have committed no murder. Had General Wheeler not sent for me

for Bethoor, my soldiers would not have rebelled, besides he did not send for my family to the entrenchments. My soldiers were not of my own country, and I previously urged that so insignificant (gureeb) a person as myself could render no material aid to the British. But General Wheeler would not listen to me and invited me into the entrenchments. When your army mutinied and proceeded to take possession of the Treasury my soldiers joined them. Upon this I reflected that if I went into the Entrenchments my soldiers would kill my family, and that the British would punish me for the rebellion of my soldiers. It was therefore better for me to die. My ryots were urgent and I was obliged to join the soldiers. For two or three times I petitioned the Sarkar, but no attention was paid to it."

Nana then disclaims all responsibility for the murder of English women and children and says that "they were killed by your Sepoys and *Budmashes* at the time that my soldiers fled from Kanpur and my brother was wounded."

After referring to the Proclamation issued by the British Government Nana says: "I have been fighting with you, and, while I live, will fight...You have forgiven the crimes of all... and I alone am left.......We will meet. And then I will shed your blood and it will flow knee-deep. I am prepared to die. Death will come to me one day, what then have I to fear?".

A reply to this letter was sent by Major J. F. Richardson on April 23, 1859. He reminded Nana that the proclamation was intended for all and that it was open to him to surrender on the identical terms under which the chiefs of Oudh laid down their arms and surrendered themselves, and if, as he said, he did not murder women and children, he could come in without fear.

Nana sent a reply to this letter from Deogarh on April 25, 1859. He said he was prepared to surrender "if a letter, written by Her Majesty the Queen and sealed with her seal, and brought by the Commanding Officer of the French or the 2nd in command" reach him. Otherwise, said he, "why

should I join you, knowing all the *dagabazi* perpetrated by you in Hindoostan?"

The same day Richardson sent a reply. He cannot, he said, add anything to his letter dated April 23. He advised Nana to study the Proclamation, and concluded as follows: "Send any responsible party to me, and I guarantee him safe conduct to and fro, and I will explain any part you may be in doubt on. Your messenger shall be treated with consideration. More I cannot do."

It will be seen that the statement of Nana that he had nothing to do with the mutiny of the Sepoys and was forced to join them much against his will, is fully supported by that of Tantia Topi (p. 255) made a few days earlier at a far distant place, and after he had been separated from Nana for a pretty long time. There is every reason to hold, therefore, that the statement is true. Nana's repeated declarations that he would fight till the last and did not fear to die as "life must be given up some day", makes it highly improbable that he would deny his active participation in the mutiny, if it were true, merely out of fear. Besides, he must have known very well that the British were sure of unearthing evidence in favour of it, if it were a fact, after his surrender.

It is worthy of note that Nana denounced in strong language the sepoys as well as some chiefs as murderers. Those who believe that Nana excited the Sepoys and organized the revolt would have to seriously consider whether they would welcome as a national hero one who did not hesitate to denounce his erstwhile colleagues—victims of his own machinations—to the British for saving his own life, though declaring repeatedly that he did not fear to die.

Nana's letter shows that he would not have carried the fight against the British to the bitter end if he could expect bare justice and fair and honourable treatment in their hands. It may be presumed that the same was the case with many others, such as the Rani of Jhansi and the *Talukdars* of Avadh, as will be related later.

Nana's letters complete the chain of evidence in support of the view taken in this book regarding the part played by the so-called heroes in the great outbreak of 1857. In this book were published for the first time the letters of Bahadur Shah, Rani of Jhansi, and Nana Sahib, which tell their own tale, differing so radically from what has been hitherto created and nurtured by fancies and cherished by sentiments. In any case the confessions of the three great heroes of 1857, now available for the first time, surely call for a reconsideration of the whole question, and perhaps a revision of our opinion about them.

FOOTNOTES

1. K, I. 576.
2. Ibid, 576 ; Sen, 128, where other details of Nana's life are given.
3. Shepherd, 7.
4. Thomson, 32-3.
5. The full text of Tantia's statement is given in M, III, 514 ff., in English translation. The statement was recorded in Mushairi on April 10, 1859, in the presence of Major Meade, Commanding Field Force. Asked by Meade Tantia said: "I have, of my own free will, caused this statement to be written ; and no one has forced me to do so, or held out hope or compromise of any sort to induce me to do so." Recently, the authenticity of the statement has been challenged on grounds which are merely a string of queries containing vague insinuations to which little value attaches so long as clear charges with evidence to support them are not forthcoming (*Freedom Struggle in Uttar Pradesh*, I. xvii).

Tantia's statement about the help rendered by Nana to Hillersdon, as quoted in the text, is fully supported by Nana himself in his petition which will be referred to later.

6. See p. 86.
7. *FM*, I. 478-9.
8. For a detailed discussion of the question, cf. Sen, 162 ff.
9. Quoted in Sen, 163. Mowbray Thomson (pp. 247-8) relates how even highly placed Indian officials blackmailed wealthy persons by forging letters in order to implicate them in the mutiny.
10. Thomson, 41.
11. *FS*, II. 123.
12. K, II. 310 f.n. ; M, III. 515.

13. See pp. 266-7.

14. Holmes, 227-8.

15. Sen, 137-8.

16. *FS*, II. 120.

17. Shepherd (2nd edition, 1878), p. 29.

18. Shepherd, 30.

19. The deposition of Kanai Prasad is quoted in *FS*, III, pp. cxxiii-iv.

20. Ibid, cxxvi.

21. *FS*, III. xxv, xix.

22. Ibid. There is some doubt about the date which, according to some authority, was June 7 (K, II. 313).

22a. See p. 201.

23. K, II, 670.

24. K, II. 670. Another proclamation of Nana is quoted in Book IV, Chapter IV, f.n.

24a. See p. 203.

25. Sen (p. 160) holds the same view.

26. For the detailed account, cf. K, II. 390.

27. See pp. 161-2.

28. M, III. 516-7.

29. Holmes, 516.

CHAPTER III

THE RANI OF JHANSI

Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi has obtained immortal fame by the role she played in the great outbreak of 1857-8. She was the only leader who died on the battle-field in that great struggle, and the valour and military strategy she displayed entitle her to a unique place in the history of that movement.

The Rani undoubtedly nursed great resentment against the British for their annexation of her territory by refusing to recognize her adopted son. She had other grievances, too. She was called upon to pay off the debts of her late husband out of her paltry allowance, and when she protested, part of her pension was resumed or suspended. Her memorial protesting against the killing of cows by the English was rejected. Naturally her animosity against the British grew stronger and stronger. But young and impetuous though she was, she did not show by any overt act that she entertained any ill feeling against the British.

The English historians of the Mutiny of 1857 are generally agreed that the Rani instigated the mutiny of the sepoys at Jhansi, on June 6, to which reference has been made above.[1] Malleson puts the case against her in the following words: "The Rani, like Nana Sahib, never forgave that which she considered an insult and outrage. Powerless, she nursed her resentment, until the revolt of Mirat and the seizure of Delhi gave her the long-wished-for opportunity. She then, in June 1857, gained to her cause the sipahis stationed at Jhansi, enticed the English officers and their families to accept her protection, and had them foully murdered. On the 9th of June she caused herself to be proclaimed Rani of Jhansi."[1a]

It is a common human failing to judge a man's previous character in the light of his subsequent conduct. There is no doubt that contemporary Englishmen, and following

them later historians, were partly carried away by such a feeling in their judgment of the chief leaders of the Mutiny like Nana Sahib and the Rani of Jhansi. Now that a century has passed since those memorable events, we are in a better mood to judge them. We should, therefore, critically discuss, in a detached attitude, without prejudice and passion of any kind, how far the available evidence justifies the view that the Rani instigated the sepoys to mutiny and caused the massacre of the English men, women, and children stationed in Jhansi.

The facts mentioned by the English historians in support of their views may be briefly stated as follows:

1. Referring to the outbreak on June 6, 1857, Kaye observes: "Early in the afternoon, the Ranee and a crowd of people, among whom were her chief adherents, with two banners borne aloft, went in procession from the Town to the cantonments; and a Mahomedan named Ahsun-Ali called all true believers to prayers. Then the troops rose at once; and fired upon their officers."[2]

2. On June 7, the Commissioner, Captain Skene, sent three British officials—"Mr. Scott and the two Purcells—to the Ranee to solicit safe-conduct after the exodus of our people from the fort. They were seized on the way by some of the Ranee's troops and carried to the Palace. The Ranee sent them to our own revolted sepoys, who deliberately murdered them. Afterwards Mr. Andrews was butchered at the palace door by the queen's own servants."[3] According to Malleson the Rani declared that "she had no concern with the English swine."[4]

3. The Rani secretly caused to be unearthed heavy guns which had been buried at the time of her husband's death and these were used to reduce the fort in which the English took shelter.[5]

4. Malleson writes: "The Rani sent messengers to the fort under a flag of truce, demanding a parley. Captain Skene responded. The native messengers then declared that the

Rani wanted only the fort; that if the Europeans would lay down their arms and surrender the position they held they should be escorted to some other station. These terms having been affirmed by the most solemn oaths, Captain Skene, on behalf of the garrison, acceded to them."[6] Malleson then relates how, as soon as the Europeans came out, the rebels carried them to a garden called the Jokan Bagh, and massacred them all.

We may now consider these points *seriatim*.

1. In a footnote Kaye refers to 'Captain Pinkney's Report' as his authority for the passage quoted. During my recent visit to London, I came across, in the Library of the India Office, a printed document entitled "*Narrative of events attending the outbreak of disturbances and the restoration of the authority in the Division of Jhansi,*" by J. W. Pinkney, Captain, Commissioner, dated Jhansi, 20th November, 1858. This is evidently meant by Kaye when he refers to Pinkney's Report, for this document forms part of the five big volumes, labelled as Kaye's Mutiny Papers, in the India Office Library. Strangely enough, the Report does not mention the Rani as having taken part in the procession. The relevant passage runs as follows: "A great number of people amongst whom were Rani's principal adherents, *viz.* Jhuroo Koour, Khooda Baksh, etc. carrying two flags proceeded from the town of Jhansi towards the cantonment." This certainly implies that, so far as Pinkney knew, the Rani did not accompany the procession. Pinkney's Report was probably one of the earliest official reports on the subject, and he implicated the Rani with the murder of Englishmen; so it is incredible that he should not have mentioned the participation of the Rani in the procession, if there were even any rumour to that effect. Scot's Report[7] also does not mention it. So far there is no evidence to show that the Rani accompanied the procession. A letter from Gordon, dated 6th June, containing the first authentic information about the mutiny, makes no allusion to the Rani or her party.[8]

Items 2, 3, and 4 are all based on the Report of Captain P. G. Scot. With reference to his sources of information he very frankly states as follows by way of prefatory remarks: —

"I have learned the following particulars from three natives who were at Jhansie at the time of the mutiny. One of them was in the fort of the city of Jhansie with the party who defended it. The three told their tales separately at Nowgong, Muhoda, and Banda; and as they agree very nearly, I think the information is correct."[9]

Neither the name nor the status of the first is mentioned, and we might refer to him as X. The second was a Bengali clerk in the Jhansi Customs Collector's Office, who, along with a few other Bengalis, was ill-treated by the sepoys and even kept in confinement for some time. The third is Sahibood-deen, khansamah of Major Skene, who made a statement on 23rd March, 1858. Scot also quotes a statement of Mrs. Mutlow, besieged in the fort, though he evidently did not put much value on it as he does not refer to the most material points in it in his Report.

It is evidently the poor status of his three Indian informants, who had obviously very little chance of knowing the truth and less ability to describe the state of things in an accurate manner, that made Scot emphasise the agreement of their different versions as his reason for accepting them. Curiously enough, though almost all the writers of the history of the mutiny, including Kaye, Malleson, and Holmes, blindly accepted the Report of Scot as the sole basis of their account, they did not scrutinise these statements, as even a superficial reading of them is enough to convince anybody that these different statements cannot be reconciled with one another, so far at least as the guilt of the Rani is concerned. Thus X says that "the mutineers forced the Ranee to assist them with guns and elephants."[10] The Bengali clerk also makes similar observations which are hardly compatible with his statement that Andrews, Purcell, and Scott were sent to their

doom by the orders of the Rani. Referring to the beginning of the Mutiny he says:—"The Ranee placed guards at her gate and shut herself in her palace. Captain Gordon sent a message to the Ranee soliciting her assistance at this crisis, but this was refused, as the mutineers threatened to put her to death and to set fire to her palace in case of her compliance with Captain Gordon's request. The Ranee's guards then joined the mutineers."[11] Again he observes: "The Ranee was threatened with instant assassination, provided she refused to side with the rebels. She accordingly consented and supplied them with a reinforcement of 1000 men and two heavy guns which she had ordered to be dug out of the earth. They had been buried three years age."[12] This is fully supported by the evidence of X, as we have seen. On the other hand Sahibood-deen says that the gun was fired against the fort by the Ranee's order, and she accompanied the murdering gang of sepoys, immediately after the massacre, to the pultun.[13] Again, Mrs. Mutlow contradicts the Bengali clerk when she says that "Mr. Gordon went to the Ranee, and got about fifty or sixty guns, and some powder and shot and balls, and she sent about fifty of her own sepoys in the fort to assist us."[14] It is not a little curious that while the historians felt no hesitation in accepting the Rani's guilt as definitely proved by the incriminating statements of these witnesses, they never allude to the points in her favour. Nor do they seem to have considered the evidence collected by Sir Robert Hamilton in April, 1858.[15]

With these preliminary remarks we may proceed to discuss the remaining three items of charge against the Rani.

2. Even if we admit, for the sake of argument, that the adherents of the Rani accompanied the procession, that Scott and the two Purcells were seized by the Rani's troops and murdered by the sepoys, and that her guns were used by them, it is to be seriously considered whether there are adequate reasons to believe that all these were done with

the knowledge and consent of the Rani. The words attributed to the Rani by Malleson (*viz.* she had no concern with the English swine) are based on the statement of the Bengali clerk of the Collector of Customs at Jhansi. It is hard to believe that the Rani said this in his presence, or that he heard it from anybody present on the occasion. It is again only the same witness who says that it was the Rani who sent the three Englishmen to the sepoys. Here also it is incredible that he could have any reliable information as to the active participation of the Rani in this matter.[16]

3. The Rani herself admits, in her letters to Erskine, to be quoted later, that she was forced, under duress, to comply with the requests of the sepoys "who behaved with much violence against herself" and even threatened "that if she at all hesitated to comply with their request, they would blow up her palace with guns".[17] The Bengali clerk and X fully support this in their evidence, as noted above. It is interesting that while Malleson and others state, on the basis of their evidence, that the Rani caused 'the guns to be unearthed and used them against the English', they carefully suppress the other part of their evidence which clearly states that the Rani was forced to lend the guns to the sepoys under duress. They also do not refer to the statement of Mrs. Mutlow that the Rani helped the English garrison with fifty or sixty guns and fifty sepoys. The khansama of Major Skene is the only witness who incriminates the Rani in this matter. He says that on June 8, he went "to the town and saw that the Karukbijlee gun had been put in order by the Ranee's order to be used against the officers."[18] He might have seen the firing, but that 'it was done by the order of the Rani' cannot but be a mere guess or inference on his part. It is irreconcileable with the evidence of X and the Bengali clerk, which is supported by the Rani's own statement, as noted above.

If we leave aside the statements of these witnesses, who were not in a position to have any knowledge of the orders

the letter, and it was given to Captain Skene"[20] It is hard to believe that all these—writing to the Rani ; getting the individual oaths, sending the letter again and receiving it back with Rani's signature—could be done in that tense moment of excitement. Besides, Mrs. Mutlow's statement is contradicted by that of X, also an eye witness of the scene, quoted in the Report of Scot. The relevant extract runs as follows:

"The mutineers at last having forced the Ranee to assist them with guns and elephants, succeeded in effecting an entrance at one of the gates, and they promised the gentlemen that if they laid down their arms and gave themselves up quietly, their lives would be spared. The gentlemen unfortunately listened to their words and came out."[21]

As a matter of fact, Scot, who reproduces Mrs. Mutlow's statement, does not, in his report, refer to the Rani in connection with the surrender of the besieged.

It is probable that in course of her correspondence with the besieged Englishmen in the Fort, she advised them to leave the fort and seek protection in a neighbouring State where the sepoys had not yet mutinied. This is hinted at in the statement of Sheikh Hingun quoted in footnote 17, and also stated expressly by Martin in his letter to be quoted later. Mrs. Mutlow might have in view some such letters when she referred to the guarantee given by the Rani. In this connection great importance attaches to the deposition of Madar Bux who actually served as the messenger between his master, Captain Gordon, and the Rani. He deposed to the following effect:

"The Tehsildar commenced talking to the Ressaldar about extricating the gentlemen (Englishmen) to which the Ressaldar agreed, and swore he would not kill them. The Ressaldar then on his own name caused the Tehsildar to write a letter to the gentlemen to the effect that if they came out they should not be hurt, and he gave it into my hands, and said

if they wanted carriage they were to get it from the Kotwal. I took the letter and went towards the Sahibs. It was now 8 A. M. On nearing the fort, I found it was surrounded by the Ranee's sepoys who abused me and said "the Ranee's orders are that no one is to enter the fort". I then went to the Ranee's house and went to...(number of persons named) ...They then sent a Harkara and Zabita Khan Mooktar with me....... A Sahib in the fort lowered a string to which I tied the letter, and it was pulled up."

This statement shows that the actual authority had passed from the hands of the Rani to the Rissaldar who gave the guarantee of safe-conduct to the besieged Englishmen. The statement further proves that the sepoys of the Rani had joined the mutineers (this is corroborated by the Bengali clerk) and did acts in her name, not only without her orders or authority, but falsely representing them as such. This should be borne in mind in assessing the guilt of the Rani for acts done by her sepoys such as murdering Andrews, Scott and the two Purcells.

It should be noted that the statement of Madar Bux is in full accord with the report of Pinkney who also says that it was the Rissaldar who gave the guarantee. Neither Pinkney nor Kaye refers to any guarantee by the Rani. Even Malleson refers only to solemn oaths taken before the messengers sent by the Rani under flag of truce. Pinkney says that various letters were also exchanged between the Rani and Captain Skene and Gordon, but to what effect cannot be ascertained. This refers to June 7. Referring to the surrender on June 8, Pinkney says: "Captain Skene having made a sign that the garrison wished to treat, the rebels and mutineers collected near the gate and promised by the most sacred oaths through the medium of Saleh Mahomed Native Doctor, that the Europeans and Anglo-Indians should be allowed to depart in safety". This version agrees with that of Kaye, and differs from that of Malleson on one important point, viz. that the Rani's name is not at all mentioned in this connection.

Mrs. Mutlow was one of the besieged, and her husband and his brother lost their lives in the massacre. She says she 'escaped unnoticed and remained hidden for about a month in the Jokan Bagh garden in a Hindu grave made like a house.' There was no such building in the garden, and as the massacre took place in that very garden, her statement that she remained there for a month can hardly be accepted as true. She also says that on June 4, Captains Gordon and Skene personally visited the Rani who gave them fifty or sixty guns, and about fifty of her own sepoys. This is partially confirmed by other witnesses, and goes a great way in refuting the charge that the Rani instigated the sepoys to mutiny. As a matter of fact, Mrs. Mutlow definitely says that the Rani actively joined the rebels only after the murder of Dunlop and Taylor.

Mrs. Mutlow further says that though her letters were intercepted and the Rani proclaimed a reward of Rs. 100 to anyone who caught her going out of the town, she remained in the Jokan Bagh for about a month. This is highly incredible on the face of it and raises a grave suspicion about the veracity of her whole statement. On the whole, it is difficult to place much reliance on the statement of Mrs. Mutlow, particularly with reference to those stirring events that took place on June 8 when the rebels were at the very gate and she, along with many others, were hovering between life and death. The distracted condition of her mind at that time can better be imagined than described. Yet, curiously enough, her statement of events on June 4, when the situation was not so desperate, has not been accepted by the English historians. Is it because they went in favour of the Rani? This view gains some support from the fact that while the statement of a Bengali clerk, who himself along with a few other Bengalis, was ill-treated by the sepoys, and that of a servant of Captain Skene, have been quoted against the Rani, not much notice has been taken of a statement made by another servant of Captain Skene recorded before a Magistrate

on 19.11.57.[22] This man, Chaprasi Ghulam Muhammad, said that at the time of the outbreak the Rani sent her vakil to Captain Skene requesting him to send the women and children to the palace, as she was very anxious about them. He further said that after Skene had removed to the fort, the Rani again sent her vakil to learn the state of things there, and also added that the Rani sent forty soldiers to guard the English. When he remarked that these forty also joined the Rani when she rebelled, the Magistrate asked him how he came to know that the Rani also rebelled. In reply the Chaprasi said that as soon as the fort was besieged Skene observed that it must be the work of the Rani, and when she offered the help she had an evil design in her mind. Then the Chaprasi significantly added that this is what Skene said; 'but I have no personal knowledge about it.'

So, against the statement of one servant of Skene, we have that of another. Similarly as against Mrs. Mutlow's statement we have the statement of Col. Martin, who was also present at Jhansi at the time. In a letter written to Damodar Rao, the adopted child of the Rani, dated 20.8.89, Martin says that his mother "took no part whatever in the massacre of the European residents of Jhansi in June, 1857."[23]

It appears from the Report of Pinkney that in November, 1858, long after the Rani had actually declared herself against the British and was defeated and killed, she was believed to have instigated the mutiny, and was held personally responsible for the murder of Scott and Purcells, though not for the massacre of June 8. It is, however, equally clear, from the discussion made above that the Rani's guilt was more an inference from the conduct of her servants and followers than based on any positive evidence. This is fully supported by the fact that an official communication, dated August 18, 1857, says that "it is the general impression that the sepoys were instigated by the Rani to attack the Fort."[24] So even two months after that incident no positive evidence of the Rani's guilt was available to the Government.[24a] Any unprejudiced

man, who calmly considers all the facts stated above, is bound to hold that the assumption that the Rani of Jhansi had any share in the mutiny at Jhansi, early in June, 1857, rests upon very weak evidence.

But while the positive evidence against the Rani amounts to very little, there is some strong evidence in favour of her innocence to which sufficient attention has not been paid so far. It is, therefore, necessary to refer to them in some detail.

In addition to the statements of the Bengali clerk, a sepoy, and two servants to the effect that the Rani was forced by the sepoys to lend them aid against her will, we have a long letter from Col. T. A. Martin who was also present at Jhansi at the time. In his letter to Damodar Rao, referred to above, he says:—"Your poor mother was very unjustly and cruelly dealt with—and no one knows her true case as I do. The poor thing took no part whatever in the massacre of the European residents of Jhansi in June 1857. On the contrary —he supplied them with food for two days after they had gone into the fort, got one hundred matchlockmen from Kurrura, and sent them to assist us. But after being kept a day in the fort they were sent away in the evening. She then advised Major Skene and Captain Gordon to fly at once to Duttia and place themselves under the Raja's protection,— but this even they would not do—and finally they were all massacred by our own troops—the Police, jail and cus (Customs?) etc. How could the poor Rani have succoured them? She refused to the day of her death to receive the 5000/- monthly granted to her as a pension by Government and she had at the time no more than 30 or 40 retainers."

We read in Pinkney's Report that "on the evening of the day of massacre proclamation was made that "The people are God's, the country is the King's, and the two religions govern." "On the 9th June, there was a dispute as to who was to possess the Jhansi territory, the Rani and Sadasheo

Rao bidding against each other. At last, on the Rani paying down a large sum, and promising much more, the mutineers made it over to her and proclamation was made that "The people are God's, the country is the Padshah's and the Raj is Ranee Luchmee Bai's". She governed, however, on the part of her adopted son, a child of eight years, named Damodar Rao. On the 11th June the mutineers left Jhansi for Delhi."

This clearly shows that at first the sepoys did not recognise the Rani as the ruler, and completely disproves the idea that the mutiny was the result of a conspiracy organized by the Rani. If the sepoys were really goaded into the mutiny by her she would immediately have been hailed as the ruler. As to the payment of the money, it is undoubtedly a fact, and is admitted by the Rani. But whether she was forced to make the payment, as she says,—and her statement is corroborated by others,—or it was a voluntary act for overbidding her rival, is a matter of inference; for from the very nature of things, the truth must have been known only to a few and these are not likely to have communicated it to Pinkney or any other English official. The fact that the sepoys left Jhansi immediately after, shows that they only cared for the loot and murder, and were supremely unconcerned about Jhansi or its ruler. For if the Rani of Jhansi had even then thought of rebelling against the British it would undoubtedly have been to her interest to keep the sepoys at Jhansi, so that they might help her against the British in the forthcoming struggle. The more we think of the whole affair the more does it appear that the mutiny of the sepoys at Jhansi early in June, 1857, was purely an act of the sepoys and the Rani had no hand in it, and she was only used as a milch cow by the mutinous sepoys.

As regards the Rani's participation in the massacre, Kaye had the candour to give her at least a benefit of doubt. "Whether the Ranee", says he, "instigated this atrocity, or to what extent she was implicated in it, can never be clearly

known. I have been informed on good authority, that none of the Rani's servants were present on the occasion of the massacre."[25]

Malleson, who superseded this volume of Kaye by substituting one of his own, observes: "A doubt has been raised as to the complicity of the Rani in the atrocious deed. But it must be remembered that not only was it the Rani who had instigated the slaughter of the three envoys sent by Captain Skene the morning after the investment, but it was she who profited by the slaughter."[26] It furnishes the most indisputable evidence, if any were needed, that in dealing with the Rani of Jhansi, Malleson acted as a prosecuting counsel, rather than the judge, which is the proper role of a historian.

The English historians have assumed that immediately after the sepoys declared Lakshmibai as the Rani and left Jhansi, she assumed independent authority and began to rule in her own name. Malleson says: "She proved herself a most capable ruler. She opened a mint, fortified the strong places, cast cannon, raised fresh troops."[27] Here, again, the facts are true, but the inference is not necessarily correct. For, fortunately Pinkney has referred to some facts which have a great bearing on this point. What followed the proclamation of the sepoys is thus described in his Report: "Sadasheo Rao left Jhansi, seized the fort of Kurrara (30 miles west of Jhansi), and declared himself Raja of Jhansi after turning out British officials. Ranee sent troops against him, defeated him and made him prisoner. The Ranee having secured Jhansi and Kurrara, the other parts of the Jhansi district acknowledged her authority with very unimportant exceptions......The Rani then sent agents to Nana Sahib, levied troops, established a mint, and began strengthening the fortifications of Jhansi and Kurrara." Later in the report we are told that 'on August 10, Tehree (Orcha) state invaded Jhansi, occupied parts of it, and besieged Jhansi fort. Rani of Jhansi expelled Tehree troops.'

Reference to the Rani's sending agents to the Nana in June must be a matter of inference or hearsay report, for if there had been any definite proof of it, the Rani's guilt would not have remained a matter of doubt till August. The same thing may be said of the Rani's entering into close relations with Tantia Topi and the rebels about this time, as mentioned later in the Report. But barring this inference about the secret negotiations of the Rani, the facts mentioned in Pinkney's Report offer a very satisfactory explanation to the military preparations referred to by Malleson. The armed opposition of Sadasheo Rao and the hostility of the neighbouring Orcha State forced the Rani to take measures for defending Jhansi, for even Pinkney's Report makes it quite clear that English authority had ceased to function. We have therefore no ground to disbelieve the Rani when she wrote to the British Government that "she only held the Jhansi district till the British Government could make arrangements to reoccupy it."

It is not a little curious that the correspondence of the Rani with the British officials, professing loyalty in unequivocal terms and declaring her innocence with regard to the Mutiny, has been completely ignored by the British historians. Pinkney, in his Report, after referring to the Rani's activities in the passage just quoted, a few lines above, observes: "At the same time she endeavoured to keep terms with our Government by writing to the Commissioner of Jubbulpoor, and to others, lamenting the massacre of our countrymen, stating that she was in no way concerned in it, and declaring that she only held the Jhansi district till our Government could make arrangements to re-occupy it." Referring to this statement Kaye remarks: "But I have searched Major Erskine's exhaustive Report, and in the four hundred and forty-four paragraphs to which it extends I cannot find a word upon the subject."[28] Nothing throws a more lurid light on the whole topic than this admission of Kaye. For the National Archives, Delhi, still possess many letters[29] out of

this correspondence which fully bear out the statement of Pinkney.

The first is a letter from the Rani of Jhansi to the Commissioner, Saugor Division. The date in not given, but this is evidently the letter, dated 12th June, 1857, which is referred to in the letter to be next mentioned. The Rani first condemns the cruelty and violence of the forces of Jhansi who killed all the European civil and military officers, the clerks, and all their families. She regrets that she was not able to assist for want of guns and soldiers, as she had only 100 or 50 men engaged in guarding her house. She also states that these forces acted rudely to her and extorted a great deal of money from her. The Rani says that "her dependence was entirely on the British authorities;" that she was threatened by the sepoys that if she at all hesitated to comply with their requests, they would blow up her palace with guns; and she was, therefore, "obliged to consent to all their demands and to pay large sums to save her life and honour." She concludes by saying that she could not write earlier as the sepoys only proceeded towards Delhi that very day.

The second is another letter from the Rani, dated June 14, in which, after referring to her letter dated 12th June, she says, she still continues to regret the fate of the Europeans of Jhansi. She then mentions that the various chiefs are acting like independent rulers, that the country was being plundered, and she had no means to restore order with her unaided resources. She had, after selling her own personal property, somehow managed to save the town from being plundered and has kept up the form of the late Government, but she could not hold on any further without a force and funds supplied by the Government. She concludes by saying that 'she trusts she may early be favoured with orders which she will see carried out.'

The third is a letter from the Commissioner, Saugor Division, to the Rani of Jhansi, dated 2nd July, 1857. After

acknowledging receipt of the two letters from the Rani, dated 12th and 14th June, the Commissioner informs her that European troops would shortly be sent to restore order in Jhansi, and requests her in the meantime "to manage the district for the British Government, collecting the revenue, raising such police as may be necessary, and making other proper arrangements." He also says that a proclamation with his seal and signature is being sent announcing that the Rani will, until further orders, rule the district in the name of the British Government, and calling on all to pay her revenue and obey her orders. A copy of this proclamation is also enclosed.

It is significant that while referring to the Rani's correspondence as simply an eye-wash, Pinkney does not mention the reply of Erskine which shows that he, at least at that time, regarded the professions of the Rani as genuine. But it is stranger still that Erskine himself should not have referred to it in his exhaustive report of 444 paragraphs. It is no less strange that even Kaye, who had all the official documents regarding the Mutiny at his disposal, and none of the other historians of the Mutiny, should have made the slightest reference to it, although all the correspondence was duly considered by the Governor-General in Council, and entered in their proceedings. This conspiracy of silence,—and it can be described in no other way,—can be explained by one theory alone, *viz*, that when the Government of India, at a later date, accepted the view that the Rani of Jhansi had instigated the mutiny of sepoys at Jhansi and was responsible for the murder of the Europeans, Erskine, trimming his sails according to the prevailing wind, deliberately concealed the fact that he was once of a different mind, and the official world ignored or suppressed all evidence which might prove inconvenient in sustaining its theory.

In any case the letter of Erskine definitely proves that the highest official on the spot, who had the best opportunity to know the truth, had not the least suspicion in his mind, even

about a month after the mutiny of the sepoys at Jhansi, that the Rani had any hand in instigating it, far less in the cruel massacre of the Europeans. Nothing but the strongest positive evidence should, therefore, incline a true historian to believe the Rani's guilt in this respect. But, as we have seen above, no such evidence has so far been produced. The only possible verdict of history is, therefore, that the Rani of Jhansi had no share in instigating the mutiny of the sepoys in June, 1857, and took no part in their subsequent actions in that connection including the massacre of the Europeans.

The world often shows strange bed-fellows. Some Indian writers have attempted to prove, out of patriotic and national sentiments, what the English asserted out of animosity to the Rani of Jhansi. Savarkar, for instance, has sought to show that the Rani of Jhansi organised the mutiny of sepoys, which he, of course, regards as the first war of national independence. He asserts that before the rising of the troops on June 4, "a few letters fell into the hands of the British Commissioner at Jhansi, from which it appeared that Lakshman Rao, a Brahmin in Rani's service, was organising a revolution, and, as a preliminary, intended to kill the British officers in command of the Army."[80] But neither Kaye nor Malleson, nor any other historian refers to these letters. The basis of Savarkar's statement seems to be the opening passage of Captain P. G. Scot's Report which runs as follows: "Some days before it (Mutiny) occurred, Captain Dunlop commanding the left wing of the 12th Native Infantry, and the station of Jhansie too, sent over to Major Kirke letters from Major Skene the Superintendent, and Captain Gordon, Deputy Superintendent of Jhansie, informing him that they had learnt from separate sources that one Luckmun Rao, the servant of the Ranee of Jhansie, was doing his best to induce the men of the 12th to mutiny. It was not known whether the Ranee authorised these proceedings."[81]

The last sentence is very important. It proves what has been said above, *viz.* that in those days the action of a servant

did not necessarily imply that of the master, and in this particular case even the British authorities did not implicate the Rani. As noted above, Captain Gordon's letter, containing the first authentic information about the mutiny of sepoys at Jhansi, did not refer to the Rani as having anything to do with it. It is, however, a happy sign of the times that the first comprehensive biography of the Rani,[32] quite recently published, makes an honest attempt to give an impartial account of her life and activities, steering clear alike of the prejudices and passions of the English, and the ebullition of sentiments of the Indian writers. The author definitely expresses the opinion that the Rani had no connection with the mutiny of the sepoys at Jhansi.

It would be interesting to note the gradual change of views of the British authorities regarding the part played by the Rani in the mutiny of the sepoys at Jhansi. Reference has been made above to the Report of Gordon in which no reference is made to the Rani in connection with the mutiny. Erskine, in his first report on the subject, dated June 22, 1857, based on the report from the Judicial Sheristadar of Jhansi, only makes the following reference to the Rani: "The mutineers......went off towards Delhi making over formal charges of the District to the Ranee of the late Raja and she is now calling on all the late servants of Government to take office under her and is managing the district." He then adds: "The writer adds that she has five guns which were some few years ago hid in the palace and have now been dug up and that he has no hopes of any order being restored till a force is sent to Jhansi as the petty chiefs and others will not obey the Rani, but he thinks a very small force would suffice as all the mutineers have gone." Erskine next wrote to the Government on July 2, enclosing copies of the two letters of the Rani dated June 12 and 14, and his reply thereto with a copy of the Proclamation. In reply to this the Secretary to the Government of India wrote to him on July 23: "In respect of the Ranee I am to state that though his Lordship

in Council does not blame you for accepting in the circumstances in which you were placed, her account of her own proceedings and sentiments and entrusting to her the management of the Jhansi territory on behalf of the British Government, yet this circumstance will not protect her if her account shall turn to be false. From the accounts supplied to Government by Major Ellis it appears that the Ranee did lend assistance to the mutineers and rebels and that she gave guns and men." The Lieutenant-Governor of N. W. P. also reported on June 18 that the Rani had gone into open revolt.

On January 1, 1858, the Ranee wrote a long letter to the Agent, Governor-General, C. I. After referring to the attacks of her territories by the Chiefs of Duttia and Orcha, she observes: "Under these circumstances I can never expect to get rid of these enemies, and to elear myself of the heavy debts without the assistance of the British Government." She concludes the letter with the following appeal: "You will give me your support in the best way you can and thus save myself and the people who are reduced to the last extremity and are not able to cope with the enemy."

This letter was duly forwarded to the Government of India. In reply the Secretary to the Government of India writes on March 3: "I am directed to inform that you have acted rightly in not replying to the Ranee's khareeta. I am at the same time desired to request that you will give your attention to the collection of evidence regarding the conduct of the Ranee of Jhansee at the time of the mutiny and massacre there and during the months which have since elapsed".

This letter shows that even in March, 1858, when the British army was advancing against Jhansi, the Government of India did not possess any definite evidence against the Rani, but all the same they were prejudiced against her to such an extent as not to send any reply to her letter. This curious attitude of the Government of India is further proved by the instructions sent by Lord Canning to Hamilton on

February 11, 1858, as to the course to be pursued in case the Rani falls into the hands of the British forces. "She must be tried, not by a Court-Martial, but by a Commissioner appointed for the purpose......If for any reason it would not be possible to deal with her at once and if there should be difficulty in keeping her in custody in or near Jhansi, she may be sent here. But it is desirable that the preliminary inquiry into her conduct which will decide whether there be grounds for a trial should be completed before she arrives here. She must not come here with any doubt as to whether she deserves to be tried or not."[33]

As directed in the Government Letter dated March 3, mentioned above, Hamilton collected evidence about the conduct of the Rani and sent his report together with copies of deposition of several witnesses on April 24, 1858. In the covering letter he says: "Having availed myself of every opportunity to make inquiries into the events which occurred at Jhansi in the early part of June last year, I have now the honour to submit the following report." "The first authentic record", says he, "is a letter from the late Capt. Gordon, dated 6th June". After giving a summary of the letter he observed that "no allusion is made in any way to the Ranee or her party." As to the rest of the evidence referred to by him it has already been dealt with above. This confidential correspondence between the Government of India and Hamilton therefore fully supports the view that there are no reasonable grounds for the belief that the Rani of Jhansi either instigated the mutiny of sepoys in June, 1857, or ever took any part in their subsequent proceedings.

When and under what circumstances the Rani turned definitely hostile towards the British and decided to fight with them, it is not easy to determine with absolute certainty, as we have no reliable evidence from the Rani's side. But the available records enable us to arrive at a fairly satisfactory conclusion. We possess a large number of confidential reports of British spies regarding Jhansi. One of these, dated

January 26, 1858, says: "It is given out that should this Vakeel (sent to the Commissioner) be treated kindly the Ranee will in no way oppose the British force. She will pay obedience to our Government and return all the districts now in her possession. While on the contrary should the British officers show displeasure she will fight to the last". Another report, dated January 31, 1858, says: "The Ranee is said to have given out that she will go out to receive the British and make over to them all the districts in her possession......The Ranee does not seem inclined to fight the troops. Her confidential servant Gopal Rao has been deputed by her to wait upon the Commissioner of Saugor and on the Agent, Governor-General, for Central India. Some Thakurs advise her to fight with the British, others dissuade her from that intention." These reports are partially corroborated by the letter of the Rani to the Agent, Governor-General, C. I., dated January 1, 1858, mentioned above, and also the fact, otherwise known, that she sent agents to him as well as to the Commissioner, Saugor Division.

The following extracts from other reports of the British spies throw interesting light on the question at issue: 3rd March, 1858—"The Chief of Banpoor wrote to the Ranee to make terms with the English as her forces would not succeed in opposing them." 15th March—"A Council of consultation was held by the functionaries of the Ranee. Kasheenath Huree and Lalloo Buxee proposed to make truce with the English. Mama Sahib and Gangadhar were of opinion that it was not proper to give up the state which was recovered after much difficulty without fighting. The Buxee and Kashinath opposed stating that the state was made over to the English by the late chief himself.........

"Laloo Baxee and Tatya Topay advised the Ranee to make terms with the English and stated that it is highly improper to keep Mardan Singh and son of the Raja of Narwar at Jhansie. The advice was taken. Khareeta has been in consequence sent to the Agent and the chiefs of

including the Governor-General, regarded her as implicated in the mutiny of the sepoys at Jhansi and the massacre of the English. This was evident, among other things, from the changed attitude even of Erskine, the Commissioner of Saugor, who had invested her with the authority of ruling Jhansi on behalf of the British. In his Report dated 25. 11. 57, he describes the Rani of Jhansi as a rebel and her enemy, the Regent Rani of Tehree (Orchha), who invaded Jhansi, as loyal. The Rani of Jhansi received no help from Erskine when her dominions were attacked by the troops of Orchha, and although she might not have knowledge of the actual views entertained by Erskine in November, 1857, she could have hardly any difficulty in guessing at the attitude of the British towards her from the fact that neither the Agent, nor the Commissioner, thought fit even to acknowledge receipt of her letters.

The attitude of Erskine and Hamilton must have made it quite clear to the Rani that she was already in the list of war-criminals, and her fate was doomed. She tried by all means in her power to remove the suspicion of the Government, but failed. In these circumstances the choice of the brave and high-souled Rani of Jhansi was not a difficult one. Many lesser men have chosen to die in the battlefield rather than by the hands of a hangman. We need not wonder, therefore, that the noble Rani of Jhansi chose to fight the British rather than submit to a trial, of which the decision was, to her mind, a foregone conclusion.

This seems to be the most reasonable explanation of the Rani's conduct in the light of such evidence as is available to us at present. It may be pointed out that she was neither the first nor the last to be forced to assume a hostile attitude against the British on account of their unjust suspicion and animosity[84]. To regard her as determined from the very beginning of the outbreak, or even before it, to fight with the British for the recovery of Jhansi which rightly belonged to her, no doubt appeals as a more suitable picture to those

who look upon her as a heroic and patriotic lady placing herself in the vanguard of the war for the independence of India,—and the number of such men is legion. They would naturally consider the above hypothesis as hardly befitting the Rani such as they conceive her to be. But their conception not only ignores positive evidence but also involves the assumption that the Rani was guilty of such a systematic and deliberate course of hypocrisy, treachery, and fraudulence in her dealings with the English, as is quite incompatible with a true nobility of soul and integrity of character with which we clothe her blessed memory. Besides, it should be remembered that her real greatness lies in her heroic conduct after she decided to fight against the English, which has secured her a high place in the history of India, and we need not rely on something unsupported by any testimony and opposed to reliable evidence, to establish or buttress her claim to greatness.

In any case, so far as available evidence goes, we are bound to regard the following as the most reasonable conclusions:

1. Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi not only did not instigate the sepoys to mutiny, but had nothing to do with their plan or programme.

2. The sepoys ill-treated her and forced her to pay money, on receiving which they proclaimed her to be the Rani of Jhansi.

3. Immediately after the mutineers had left Jhansi in a body, the Rani sent a full report to the British authorities and asked for their help in maintaining order in the District.

4. The Commissioner Saugor Division believed in her innocence and nominated her to rule the territories on behalf of the British Government till such time as they could re-establish a regular system of administration.

5. The Rani accepted this position and ruled over Jhansi in the name, or on behalf, of the British Government.

6. The British authorities, however, gradually changed their views about her innocence, and suspected her of voluntarily helping the mutineers with guns and men.

7. Although the Rani pointed out that she was forced by the sepoys to lend them such assistance, the British authorities did not believe in this statement and suspected her complicity both with the mutiny of the sepoys and the massacre of the English at Jhansi.

8. The Rani sent pathetic appeals to the British authorities up to January 1858, and possibly even later, protesting her innocence and professing her loyalty to the British in the most unequivocal terms.

9. Even up to March, 1858, when Sir Hugh Rose had already begun his campaign in Central India, the Rani was unable to decide whether to fight against the British or to make terms with them. She would have chosen the latter course if she succeeded in dispelling the suspicions of the British against her.

10. It was only when the Rani felt convinced that the British Government held her responsible for the mutiny and the massacre of Englishmen at Jhansi, and that she would have to face a trial on this charge, that she decided to fight,—preferring an honourable death in the battlefield to a hangman's rope.

11. Once she arrived at this decision she never wavered for a moment, and fought with courage, determination and skill which won unstinted admiration even from her enemies.[35]

12. Her letters clearly show that she condemned the mutiny of troops and the consequent outbreak of violence and disorder (the so-called 'popular upsurge') in Jhansi, and did not look upon either of these as a national (or regional) war of independence of which she is supposed by many Indians today as one of the great leaders.

FOOTNOTES

1. See p. 90.
1a. Mal. 258-9.
2. K. III. 365.
3. Ibid. 366-7.
4. M. I, 187. Malleson names the three persons sent to the Rani and murdered by the sepoys as Andrews, Scott, and Purcell (Ibid.).
5. Ibid. 184, 187.
6. Ibid. 189.
7. *FS*, IV. Appendix A. It should be noted that Forrest, who edited this and other Mutiny Records, and is the latest official writer on the subject, does not refer to the Rani's participation in the 'Procession' in his summary of events in the introduction to the volume.
8. Cf. Letter of Sir Robert Hamilton to the Secretary, Government of India, dated Jhansi, 24th April, 1858 (Political Proceedings Supplement, 30th December 1859—No. 280) (MS. D.). Besides Gordon's letter it encloses the depositions or statements by Ameen Khan, Shaikh Hingun, Madar Bux and Dookenundun; the first, a sepoy, and the other three, menial servants of Capt Gordon.
9. *FS*, IV. Appendix A p. i.
10. Ibid. p. iv.
11. Ibid. p. vii.
12. Ibid. pp. vii-viii.
13. Ibid. p. xi.
14. Ibid, p. xiii.
15. See f.n. 8
16. According to the deposition of Shaikh Hingun, Hookabardar to Captain Gordon, dated 16-3-58, "Andrews was recognised by Rani's sepoys who killed him at some distance from the Rani's dwelling". Another menial of Captain Gordon, Madar Bux, in his deposition, refers to Mr. Scott and the two Purcells "being killed by Rani's sepoys", but does not refer to any order of the Rani. He also says that Andrews was killed separately at Ganjee Khana by Rani's sepoys (MS. D.). It would not be unreasonable to infer, therefore, that the Rani's sepoys could, and did, act on their own account without any reference to the Rani.
17. According to the statement of Ameen Khan (see f.n. 8 above), a sepoy at Jhansi, the sepoys went to the palace of the Rani with loaded guns and demanded asistance and supplies. She was obliged to yield and to furnish guns, ammunitions and supplies.

Shaikh Hingun, Hookabardar to Captain Gordon, says in his deposition that Gordon wrote a letter to the Rani from the besieged fort. The

Rani sent an answer to the following effect: "What can I do? The sepoys have surrounded me and say that I have concealed the gentlemen (Englishmen) and that I must get the fort evacuated and assist them to save myself. I have sent guns and my followers. If you insist to save yourself abandon the fort. No one will injure you"

18. *FS.* IV, p. xi.

19. Cf. the remarks of Kaye and Wilson about the thoroughly unreliable character of such witnesses (K. II. 306-7).

20. *FS.* IV. xiii.

21. Ibid. iv.

22. Quoted in the *Jhansir Rani* (in Bengali) by Srimati Mahasveta Bhattacharya, pp. 127-8.

23. Copies of this letter and the other documents procured from the National Archives, Delhi, by late G. C. Tambe were placed at my disposal by his son Dr. E. G. Tambe, for which I take this opportunity to offer my thanks to him.

24. Ball, I. 274.

24a. Other official letters, quoted later, prove that even to the very last the Government had no evidence against the Rani's guilt in their possession.

25. K. III. 369.

26. M. I. 190.

27. Ibid. 191.

28. K. III. 370.

29. These letters and documents from National Archives, referred to below, were collected by Late G. C. Tambe. See f.n. 23 above. These have been published in *BPP*, LXXVI, Part I, 46, 49ff.

30. Savarkar, 239.

31. *FS*, IV. p. i.

32. *Jhansir Rani* (in Bengali) by Srimati Mahasveta Bhattacharya.

33. *FS.* IV. lxix.

34. An analogous instance is furnished by the cases of Arjun Singh of Porahat. (cf. the detailed account in the *Journal of the University of Bihar*, vol. II, pp. 78ff.).

35. See p. 183.

CHAPTER IV

Tantia Topi and Azimulla

1. TANTIA TOPI

Tantia Topi never claimed to be a leader, and always professed to act on behalf of Nana. Reference has been made, in course of the previous narrative, to the various military activities of Tantia. He is unique in one respect among the leading figures of the Mutiny. For we get a fairly detailed account of his activities from his own statement, which he voluntarily made on April 10, 1859, after his capture by the British[1].

All that he says of his early life and his family is contained in the first paragraph of this statement which runs as follows:—

"My name is Tantia Topi; my father's name is Pandurang, inhabitant of Jola-Pargannah, Patoda-Zillah, Nagar. I am a resident of Bithur. I am about forty five years of age, in the service of Nana Sahib in the grade of companion or aide-de camp."

His full name was Ramchandra Panduranga Topi. He is generally accused as being the chief agent in the massacre of the English at Kanpur, and this point has been discussed above."[2]

Tantia accompanied Nana throughout his campaign as mentioned above, and after the fall of Kanpur returned with him to Bithur. Then he fled with Nana, across the Ganga, to Fatepur. At the orders of the Nana, he joined the 42nd N. I. and fought with the English at Bithur, but being defeated, returned to Nana. A few days later, he received orders from Nana to proceed to Gwalior to win over the sepoys of the Gwalior Contingent. He accordingly visited the Morar Cantonment, and with mutinous sepoys of the Gwalior Contingent, returned to Kalpi. Nana sent his

nephew. Rao Sahib, to Kalpi, and according to his order Tantia advanced against Kanpur. His initial success and ultimate failure in this campaign, subsequent activities till he joined the Rani of Jhansi, and military campaigns, along with her, till the fall of Gwalior have been described above.[3] After the fall of Gwalior, he carried on a guerilla warfare of which a brief account has been given above. But a more detailed account is given in the following passage of Tantià's own statement. It describes his operations from the time when he was defeated at Jowra, Alipur, and crossed the Chambal.

"We crossed the Chambal, and reached Tank *via* Sirimuthia. The Nawab of Tank fought with us, and we took four guns from him. With these guns we proceeded to Bhilwara *via* Mahdipur and Indragarh. We were there attacked by the English force and I fled during the night, accompanied by my army and guns. At that time I had eight or nine thousand men and four guns with me. We all proceeded to a village called Kotra (about four miles from Nathduwarra) and halted there for one night. The next morning we moved towards Patan, and after proceeding about one mile, the English army arrived, and an action took place. We left our four guns and fled, reaching Patan as fugitives. (The Nawab of Banda, who had come with us from Kalpi, and the Nawab of Kumona, who had joined us at Indurki, were both with us). On our arrival at Patan fighting commenced between us and the raja of that place; we conquered, and got possession of all the raja's guns and magazines, and surrounded his palace, in which he was. The next day I went and told the raja to give some money to pay the expenses of my army. He said he could give five lakhs of rupees, but not more. I returned and told the Rao Sahib this. The next day the Rao Sahib sent for the raja and demanded twenty-five lakhs from him. The raja declared he could not give more than five lakhs; but, after some discussion, it was settled that he should pay fifteen lakhs. The raja said he would go to his palace and send this sum. He went accord-

ingly, and sent two and a quarter lakhs in cash, and promised that the rest should follow. By the next day he had paid up five lakhs.

"Imam Ali, Wurdi-major 5th irregular cavalry, ill-treated the raja very much, and the latter fled during the night. We remained there five days, and issued three months' pay to our troops at the rate of thirty rupees each sowar, and twelve rupees to each foot-soldier per mensem.

"We then marched for Sironj, taking eighteen guns with us. On reaching Rajgarh, the English army came up and attacked us. We left our guns and fled, and reached Sironj *via* Nija Killa. We halted at Sironj eight days, and having taken four guns from the Tank Nawab's agent at Sironj, we proceeded thence to Isaoghar. On arrival there we demanded supplies; but the Isaoghar people would not give them. We therefore attacked Isaoghar, and plundered it. The following day we halted, and the Rao Sahib told me to go to Chandairi, and that he would come round by Tal Bahat. I accordingly went to Chandairi, and the Rao Sahib came to Lallatpur from (or by) Tal Bahat. On my reaching Chandairi, four shots were first fired on us from the fort, which we attacked and fought with Sindhia's agent. After three days we marched from Chandairi towards Mangrauli, taking with us eleven guns viz. seven which we had brought from Isaoghar and the four we had got from Sironj. On our march to Mangrauli, we met the English army. Shots were fired for a short time, when we left all our guns and fled (of the eleven guns five were with me and six with Rao Sahib. I lost my five in this fight, but the Rao Sahib kept his six.)

"I reached Jaklom, and the next day went to Sultanpur, where the Rao Sahib also arrived. After three days the English force arrived, and the Rao Sahib took his army to Jaklom (about five miles from Lallatpur), and some firing took place there. I was not present in this fight. The Rao Sahib returned to Lallatpur, and the following day proceeded to Kajuria (ten miles from Sultanpur) and halted there. The

next day the English army came up just as we were going to march, and an action commenced which lasted an hour and a half. We then left all our guns and fled, and reached Tal Bahat. We halted there, and the following day went to Jaklom, and thence to a village called Itaia, twelve miles distant, where we stopped. We there heard that the English army was coming to surprise us, and marched at night. The English force came up in the morning, and our army became separated. I accompanied the Rao Sahib, and we proceeded, *via.* Rajghar, and crossed the Narbada, and got to Kaogaon Battis *via* Kandula. The troops who were with us burned the Government Thana and bungalow at Kandula. The Rao Sahib forbade their doing so, but they would not obey him. This was about four months ago. At Kaogaon Battis there were some of Holkar's troops—one hundred and forty sowars, one company of infantry, and two guns. These we forced to join us, and took them with us when we marched the following day towards Gujrat, crossing the high road where the telegraph-wire ran. The sepoys broke the wire and plundered seven hackeries which were on the road proceeding with Government property towards Gwalior, and seized the chuprassis and chaukidars who were with the hackeries, and took them with them. Some of the chaukidars belonging to the chauki were hanged by them. We there left the high road and proceeded westward. The next day we were surprised by the British force, and leaving our two guns, we fled, and reached the Narbada. An officer, with one hundred men, was on the opposite bank. Our force commenced to cross, and this officer and party of sowars ran off. We plundered a village there called Chikla, and marched thence at midnight. After proceeding thirty-four miles, we halted at Rajpura. The next day we took three thousand nine hundred rupees and three horses from the raja of that place, and from it went on to Chota Udaipur. The following day the English force surprised us; some of them were killed, and some of ours. From Chota Udaipur we

went on to Deogarh Bari, and our army became separated. There was jungle at that place, and I halted there two days. Our troops having been collected again, we started, and went to Banswara. Our men plundered there sixteen or seventeen camel-loads of cloth (some of Ahmadabad) belonging to a mahajan which they found there. We thence went to Salomar, and I called on Kaisar Singh, agent for the Udaipur raja, to furnish us with supplies. He sent us some, and the following day we again started with the intention of going to Udaipur. However, *en route* we received tidings of the English force, and retraced our steps to Bhilwara. We remained there two days and then proceeded to Partabgarh, where we fought for two hours with a body of English troops which had come from Nimach. About 8 o'clock P. M. we ran off, and proceeded about six miles to the east of Mandisor and halted there. We then went on to Zirapur, making three stages *en route.* An English force surprised us there, and we were again surprised by another force at Chapra Barod. We fled thence to Nahargarh, the agent of the Kotah raja, at which place nine shots were fired at us from guns. We moved out of range, and halted there during the night; and the Rao Sahib sent Risaldar Nannu Khan to call raja Man Singh. The raja came and accompanied us—*i. e.* the Rao Sahib, myself, and our force—to a place about two miles from Paron, where we halted. We remained there two days, and on the third went on to a place about eight miles beyond Kilwarri, whose name I do not remember. Raja Man Singh accompanied us as far as a river which we crossed *en route,* and then left us. We made two stages thence to Indragarh; and Firoz Shah with the Khas Risala (body-guard) and 12th irregulars met us there. The next day we went on, making two stages to Dewas. which is fourteen miles from Jaipur. The English force surprised us there; some men on both sides were killed, and flying thence towards Marwar, we reached a village about thirty koss from Marwar, whose name I do not remember. At 4 o'clock that night we were surprised by the English

force, and the 12th irregular cavalry separated from the Rao Sahib's army. The next day Thakur Narayan Singh, Ajhit Singh, uncle of Raja Man Singh, and Thakur Ganga Singh joined us at that place (? to which the Rao's army had fled). They were coming in this (the Paron) direction. I had been quarrelling with the Rao Sahib all the way from Deogarh Bari, and told him I could flee no longer, and that whenever I saw an opportunity for doing so, I should leave him. The opportunity for doing so here offered, and I left him and accompanied the (three) above-named parties in this (the Paron) direction. When I left the Rao Sahib he had about six thousand men with him. But three men (two Pandits to cook my food and one sais) and three horses and one tattu accompanied me. The names of the two Pandits were Ram Rao and Narayan. The sais's name was Gobind, but he left me and ran off after coming two stages. We reached the Paron jungle and met raja Man Singh. Ajhit Singh took leave of raja Man Singh, and went to his home. Narayan Singh and I remained with raja Man Singh. The raja said, "Why did you leave your force? You have not acted right in so doing." I replied that I was tired of running away, and that I would remain with him whether I had done right or wrong. I heard after this that Rao Sahib's army had gone to Patan, and thence towards Sironj. I told raja Man Singh I would send a man to get intelligence of them, and he approved of my doing so. I sent accordingly, and got information that the Rao Sahib was not there; but Imam Ali, Wurdi-major, Firoz Shah, and the Ambapani-wala Nawab, Adil Muhammad, were there with eight or nine thousand men. Imam Ali, Wurdi-major of the 5th irregular cavalry, wrote to me to come and join them. I had lost my master's (the Nana's) seal, and had another made up at Paron.

"When I heard, as above, from the Wurdi-major, I sent a man to raja Man Singh, who was at Mahudia in Major Meade's camp (he had then been there three days), to inform him that I had received a note of this purport, and to ask him

if I should go or remain. Raja Man Singh had consulted me before giving himself up to Major Meade and had left one of his men with me, saying, "Stop wherever this man takes you". Raja Man Singh replied to my message that he would come in three days to see me, and we should then settle what to do.

"He came accordingly, on the third day, at night, and spoke a great deal to me, and told me that he had met Major Meade, and that his disposition was good. When I asked him what he advised—whether I should go or remain—he said he would reply in the morning. I then went to sleep, and during the night some sepoys of the Government came and seized me, and took me to Major Meade's Camp"[4]

This very free and frank statement of Tantia Topi throws interesting sidelight on the general situation in Central India during the last phase of the great outbreak. It also confirms the general impression that Tantia avoided pitched battle with the British even when he was in a position of vantage, and was uniformly defeated and fled whenever he was forced to fight. With the single exception of his victory over Windham's force at Kanpur, Tantia never scored any success against the English in open battle. His defeat at the hands of Sir Hugh Rose before Jhansi is the most ignominious, for he had all the advantages, and his enemy, cooped up between the Fort of Jhansi and his forces, with a much smaller number of troops, was in the most perilous position. His failure to relieve Jhansi at that critical moment reflects the greatest discredit on him. His return home after the defeat at Kunch, and his precipitate flight from the strong fort of Gwalior without offering a strong resistance, are heavy counts against him. As against all this must be weighed his unfaltering allegiance to Nana and adherence to his cause, from beginning to end, amid most severe trials, and the wonderful skill he displayed in his guerilla warfare.

Malleson pays the following well-deserved tribute to him:

"Tantia Topi was a marvellous guerilla warrior. In pursuit of him, Brigadier Parke had marched, consecutively, 240 miles in nine days; Brigadier Somerset, 230 in nine days, and, again, seventy miles in forty-eight hours; Colonel Holmes, through a sandy desert, fifty-four miles in little over twenty-four hours; Brigadier Honner, 145 miles in four days. Yet he slipped through them all—through enemies watching every issue of the jungles in which he lay concealed, only to fall at last through the treachery of a trusted friend. His capture, and the surrender of Man Singh, finished the war in Central India. Thenceforth his name only survived[5]."

The uniform of Tantia Topi is now preserved in London, in the Royal United Service Museum, Whitehall. It is an 'Achkan' made of black woollen material, embroidered with *zari*. The inscription reads: "Coat of the Indian rebel leader, Tantia Topi, who was hanged on the 18th April, 1859." There is also a small pencil sketch of Tantia Topi, with a letter from a retired Indian Army Officer, Major Baugh (?). It reads: "I certify that the above portrait of the notorious malefactor, Tantia Topi, was painted by my father, the late Major General C. R. Baugh, when a Captain and Brevet Major, at Sipri on the 18th April, 1859, he being in command of a weak wing (250) of the Regiment of the 9th B. O. N. I, which formed the infantry portion of a small flying column, under the command of Major R. Mead, afterwards Sir Richard Mead. Tantia Topi was arrested by a N. O. and a few men of the 9th B. O. N. I.; when Mansingh had betrayed him. My father sketched him just before the light manacles had been knocked off. The rope broke the first time, but they strung him up again, and that time there was no hitch in the proceedings." The letter is dated December, 1928.

2. AZIMULLA

Azimulla, like Tantia Topi, was a mere agent of Nana Sahib, and never claimed to play an independent part. Born in a humble life, he rose to be a confidante of Nana and was sent by him to England to prosecute his appeal to the Court of Directors against the decision of the Government of India to withhold from him the annual pension granted to his father, the ex-Peshwa Baji Rao II. Azimulla had a comely person and spent his time and money liberally in London between intrigue in favour of Nana and love-making with English ladies. His failure in the first was as conspicuous as his success in the second. He lost the case of Nana, but won the hearts of many English ladies, some of whom were infatuated enough to offer their hands in marriage to the black Indian, and overwhelmed him with most passionate love-letters. So Azimulla did not return to his master empty-handed. He could not bring Nana any concession or even consolation for the money he spent, but brought bundles of letters from his lady-loves breathing romantic sentiments in every line. When, after the defeat and flight of Nana, the infuriated British army ransacked his palace at Bithur, they came across a box full of these letters. They hoped to find in it evidence of Nana's conspiracy in the shape of letters written to other chiefs to rise against the hated English and make a common cause to liberate their motherland from their yoke ; they found instead letters written by the ladies of their own race pouring forth their love to Azimulla in the most effusive manner. We can easily picture to our mind the effect of this discovery upon the minds of the British officers whose official duty required them to read these letters[6].

Azimulla remained three years in Europe, residing for the most part in London, but he also visited Paris and Constantinople. On his way back from England Azimulla visited Crimea, the scene of a battle then going on between the British and the Russians. He even risked his life to

estimate the relative strength and military skill of the two parties by observing the actual fight at close quarters. He formed a very poor opinion of the valour and fighting quality of the men of England in striking contrast to the charms of their women. His heart was capacious enough to carry this impression of the men along with more agreeable and sweeter thoughts of their women. Though direct evidence is lacking, it is highly probable that he was at least partly responsible for the canard, then widely prevalent in India, that Russian, as a military power, was far superior to the British, and was ready to help India in case of any fight against the latter. We cannot altogether discount the idea that this propaganda had some share in instigating the mutiny of the sepoys or the revolt of the civil population, and in sustaining or stiffening their resistance.

But Azimulla was above all communalism. Though himself a Mussulman, he advised Nana not to join Bahadur Shah in order to play a second fiddle in Delhi, but instead to declare himself a Peshwa at Kanpur. We may regard this action as detrimental to the interest of India's struggle for independence, but we can hardly blame Azimulla if he placed the interest of his master above every other consideration, including the freedom of India, of which he had probably not the least conception.

Some sensation was created about ten years ago by the discovery of Azimulla's Diary, but it has been proved to be a forgery.

FOOTNOTES

1. See Bk. III, Ch. II. fn. 5.

2. See p. 202.

3. See pp. 178 ff. Sir Hugh Rose writes in a letter dated April 30, 1858 :

"For some time past, Sir Robert Hamilton had given me information that Tantia Topee, a relative and the Agent of Nana Sahib, had been collecting and organizing a large body of troops in the neighbourhood of Mhow and Nowgong in Bundelkhand, which was called "the army of the Peishwa", and displayed the standard of that abolished authority.

"After the fall of Chirkaree, this army was reinforced by the numerous rebel-troops, sepoy from Kalpi, and Bundeelas, who had besieged and taken it. Towards the end of last month, I received constantly reports that this Force, estimated at 20 or 25,000 men with 20 or 30 guns, was advancing against me." *FS.* IV. xcv.

4. M. III. 518-524.

5. *Mal.* 397.

6. Roberts—II, 427.

CHAPTER V

Kunwar Singh and Ahmadulla

1. KUNWAR SINGH

The Rajput Chief Kunwar Singh, the *Talukdar* of Jagdishpur, near Arrah, was an old man of seventy or more,[1] when he joined the mutineers at Arrah as mentioned above.[2] He was undoubtedly the greatest military leader that India produced during the outbreak of 1857-8. But like the other leaders, he passed the greater part of his life in friendly associations with the British Government. Even as late as 1853 Kunwar Singh was a trusted friend of the British. Mr. William Tayler, the Commissioner of Patna, visited Arrah in 1853 and during his stay there was an outbreak in Jail. The prisoners were in a state of furious excitement and attacked the English Medical Officer while he visited the jail. Unable to cope with the situation Tayler asked for the help of Kunwar Singh which was readily offered. In this connection Tayler writes:

"Meanwhile I had sent for the renowned Koer Singh, the powerful landholder, *who was afterwards driven into rebellion by the shortsightedness of the Bengal Government.* He came readily and with him I entered the Jail."[3]

We need not describe in detail the Jail incident, but the words, put in italics by us in the above passage, are very significant. It proves that even Tayler, who was later accused of indiscriminate arrest of Indians on mere suspicion of rebellious activities, was definitely of opinion that Kunwar Singh was a friend of the English, but turned against them on account of personal grievances.

These are described by Kaye in the following passage:

"Kower Singh had engaged to obtain an advance of money, to the extent of twenty lakhs of rupees, for the payment of his debts. There was to have been a gradual process of liquida-

tion from the proceeds of his estates through the Collector of Shahabad. This loan had not been actually negotiated. But the capitalist had promised that the money was shortly forthcoming. There were some delays, as there commonly are when money is to be advanced—but in the meanwhile some smaller sums had been advanced by other parties, and some advantageous compromises had been arranged. Affairs were in this state when suddenly the Sudder Board of Revenue sent through the Patna Commissioner "a peremptory message to Kower Singh that unless he obtained the entire loan within a month (which was impossible) they would recommend the Government to withdraw all interference with his affairs and to abandon the management of his estates."[4]

Holmes, who was by no means friendly to the Indian rebels, has referred to Kunwar Singh as follows:

"This man was a Rajpoot noble, named Kunwer Singh, who, formerly a staunch adherent of the English power, had lately cooled in his friendship from resentment at the hard usage which he, in common with many other great landowners, had received from the Revenue Board of Bengal. As, however, he had a strong personal friendship for Tayler, he might even now have thrown in his lot with the English, if he had not heard at the critical moment that an important law-suit in which he was engaged had gone against him. Tayler had earnestly interceded for him with Halliday, but in vain."[5]

As a matter of fact, the highest local officials bear testimony to Kunwar Singh's loyalty to the British up to the very end,—more than two months after the outbreak of the mutiny at Mirat. On June 14, Tayler wrote to the Government: "Many people have sent me letters, imputing disloyalty and disaffection to several Zemindars, especially Baboo Kower Singh. My personal friendship for him, and the attachment he has always shown me, enable me confidently to contradict the report." Again, on July 8, he wrote: "Baboo Kower Singh would, I am sure, do anything he could; but he has

now no means. He has written to me several times to express this loyalty and sympathy."[6] Dr. Sen, the eminent historian of the Mutiny, also agrees with the view that Kunwar Singh was all along a friend of the British.[7] But recently an attempt has been made to prove that Kunwar Singh had "been meditating on a plan to assail British authority at least for some time on the eve of the outbreak of this movement (Mutiny of 1857) if not all along from 1845".[8] The only evidence that Kunwar Singh meditated rebellion as far back as 1845, is a statement by J. J. Hall that the former was suspected of being involved in the anti-British plot of 1846 at Patna. William Tayler, Commissioner of the Patna Division till August, 1857, knew all the details about it and regarded this plot as a part of a general conspiracy to destroy the English authority. He was accused, very justly, of indiscriminate arrest of Indians on mere suspicion of rebellious activities. Yet, as mentioned above, Tayler had full confidence in the loyalty and friendship of Kunwar Singh till the last. The mere suspicion of Hall cannot weigh against this evidence.

Similarly, the view that Kunwar Singh was preparing for the revolt for a long time, and even organized the mutiny of sepoys at Danapur, rests upon suspicions only and no positive evidence. Reference has been made to the reports published in the *Englishman*, a Calcutta daily.[9] No more importance attaches to these than the reports made by "trustworthy agents" to various British officials to the effect that Kunwar Singh "had enjoined upon his ryots to be ready when called," "had written to two of the largest Zamindars of the Gaya district", "was collecting arms and men", "had been selected by the Danapur sepoys as their Raja," and "supplied boats to them to cross the river Son", and so on.[10] It is interesting to note that such reports, not only against Kunwar Singh but against many other *Zamindars* of Bihar, reached Tayler, but he attached no credit to them.[11] The fact that Kunwar Singh did actually revolt, is held out as convincing evidence of the truth of these reports. But it is conveniently forgotten

that reports against the rest proved to be untrue. Much has been made of the report of Mr. Wake which runs as follows:

"I know that there is an idea prevalent that Kooer Singh's treason was not premeditated, but I am certain that for three months at least he was only biding his time. There is or ought to be in the Commissioner's office an anonymous petition, from a man who would not come forward by me to Mr. Tayler, the late Commissioner, detailing the whole of the Baboo's plans and preparations and even the date (the 25th July) on which the Dinapur Regiments would mutiny. This was forwarded by me I think a week before the meetings and every world in it proved true."[12] This report was written on 29 January, 1858, when Kunwar Singh had proved to be a formidable leader of the revolt. But the same Mr. Wake wrote a letter to the Government on July 19, 1857, in which he makes the following observation on Kunwar Singh:

"He is nominally the owner of vast estates, whilst in reality he is a ruined man, and can hardly find money to pay the interest of his debts. As long, therefore, as law and order exist, his position cannot improve: take them away, and he well knows that he would become supreme in his district. I do not think he will ever openly oppose the Government as long as he thinks that Government will stand, but I do think that, should these districts be ever the scene of a serious outbreak, he may take it into his head that it is time to strike a blow for his own interests, and his feudal influence is such as to render him exceedingly dangerous in such an event."[13]

It is to be noted that on the day he wrote this letter, Wake was in possession of the "anonymous petition" on which he later laid so much stress. Evidently he did not put much faith on it then. It is on record that on the basis of this petition the Government searched the house of Kunwar's Arrah agent, Kaliprasad, but no incriminatory evidence was found[14]. Mr. Wake conveniently forgot this when he wrote the report on 29 January.

An important evidence which ought to weigh most in arriving at a right conclusion about Kunwar Singh is generally ignored[15] and therefore deserves mention in some detail. On receiving various adverse reports against Kunwar Singh, Tayler asked him to come to Patna, but he excused himself on the ground of illness. This is regarded as an evidence that he had already been meditating rebellion and therefore "tactfully avoided" the meeting. But what is generally ignored is that Tayler, *at the same time,* instituted a confidential inquiry about Kunwar Singh.

"On 19 July Syed Azimuddin Hussain, the deputy-collector of Arrah, was at the same time directed to scrutinise everything connected with and about Kunwar Singh and to submit a confidential report regarding it to the commissioner. Azimuddin visited him, and found him lying on bed. He pleaded extreme sickness, and added that being old and infirm he was unable to take the journey to Patna at the stage". Azimuddin's report was favourable to Kunwar Singh. "I could elicit nothing", he says, "by secret enquiry which might warrant the conclusion that Kunwar was making secret preparations for a revolt. Nor was there any reason to suppose that his people were particularly disaffected". All that he could find was that "should he raise the standard of revolt his people would follow him". He exculpated Kunwar Singh on the ground that he made payments to his creditors in the months of May and June and did not lay by supplies of war. Azimuddin could not believe that a man who was penniless could afford to make preparations to go to war. Some persons questioned the bonafides of Azimuddin, but it should be remembered that he "gave proofs of rare fidelity to the British and was one of the besieged in the fort".[16]

Very interesting light is thrown on this topic by Mr. E. A. Samuells, who had succeeded Tayler as Commissioner of Patna on 5 August, 1857. There was no love lost between the two—not to put it more bluntly, Samuells had written officially against Tayler and the latter had replied to his

observations. This kind of personal and mutual recriminations went on since the beginning of April, 1858. On 4 December, 1858, Samuells wrote a long letter to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, making adverse comments on various actions of Tayler. One of the items concerned Kunwar Singh. Samuells challenged the statement of Tayler, quoted above, that the action of the Government of Bengal drove Kunwar Singh to rebellion. On the contrary, he laid the blame entirely at the door of Tayler himself. "It was", said he, "solely owing to his (Tayler's) own carelessness and procrastination that the matter was not settled a month before the mutiny". But, what is more important, Samuells asserted that it was Tayler's action that goaded Kunwar Singh into rebellion. This requires a little explanation.

Tayler grew suspicious about the activities of the Wahabis at Patna and, on 20 June, 1857, invited three of their leaders, along with some others, to his house for consultation on the state of affairs. After the conference was over, he detained the three leaders and practically kept them in confinement. This act of treachery was followed by a proclamation to the effect that all the citizens of Patna must surrender the arms in their possession within twenty-four hours, and shall not leave their homes after nine o'clock at night. On 3rd July there was a procession of the Muslims at Patna in course of which one Dr. Lyell, assistant to the Opium Agent, was killed. Forty-three rioters were tried by a special Commission consisting of Tayler and the Magistrate of Patna. After a mockery of trial nineteen rioters were hanged and five transported for life. Samuells, who succeeded Tayler, suspecting grave miscarriage of justice, referred the papers to the Nizamat Adalat which let off 19 of the 21 surviving accused condemned by Tayler (for his colleague had disavowed in writing his responsibility for the sentences of most of them).

Samuells insinuated in his letter to the Government, dated 4 December, 1858, mentioned above, that it was the conduct

of Tayler at Patna that led Kunwar Singh to revolt. Samuells cites evidence to prove that "Kooer Singh sent round a circular to his villages in which he professed his belief that Mr. Tayler had summoned him to Patna for the purpose of hanging him and called upon his tenantry to save him". He also quotes the following passage from a letter written to him by a gentleman living in Shahabad, "who had excellent opportunities for getting at the truth":

"The general opinion and belief is that Kooer Singh's defection was forced on him 1st, by Mr. Tayler's improper treatment of the Wahabees in Patna and 2nd, by the indiscreet language used by Mr. (......). Could Kooer Singh have relied on Mr. Tayler's justice and impartiality he would have appeared at once notwithstanding Mr. (...) derogatory threat ; but seeing the whole system of hanging going on at Patna at the time and the breach of all honourable engagements indulged in by the head of the district, Kooer Singh in a moment of exasperation and despair of being more honourably treated than others threw off his allegiance to the British Government".[16a]

Whatever we might think of the view of Mr. Samuells, it is interesting to note that even he, who spared no pains to find out the faults of Tayler, could not challenge the latter's view about the loyalty of Kunwar Singh until the very last, though he assigned a different, but not very dissimilar, reason for the sudden change in the attitude of that Rajput Chief towards the British Government. On the whole, it is impossible to hold, on the basis of available evidence, that Kunwar Singh's action was a premeditated one, far less that he organized the rebellion as a war of independence, or joined the mutinous sepoys in order to liberate the motherland. The more reasonable view of his conduct is that contained in Mr. Samuells's letter or Mr. Wake's letter of July 19, quoted above. This is further supported by the statement of Nishan Singh, an able lieutenant of Kunwar Singh, who attended his leader throughout his campaign. He was at Arrah when the muti-

nous sepoys from Danapur reached that town. What followed is thus described by him.

"Meanwhile the rebellious sepoys of Dinapore reached Arrah and looted the town. And they threatened the servants of Kunwar Singh to bring him there or they would loot Jagdispore (i.e. the native place of Kunwar Singh). This threat was not made in my presence and I state it according to what I have heard. Accordingly Kunwar Singh came from Jagdispore to Arrah on the very day the sepoys had arrived at Arrah i.e. 18th Savan. After two or three days the Government forces arrived and an engagement took place between them and the rebellious sepoys of Dinapore. Kunwar Singh was helping the rebels. I was also staying at my place at Arrah and went to pay my respects to Kunwar Singh whenever I was called for."[17]

We need not pursue further the story of Nishan Singh, as the important points have been incorporated in the account, given above,[18] of the activities of Kunwar Singh. But if we may put any trust in Nishan Singh's statement, we have to accept the view of Tayler and Wake quoted above, and revise the opinion, generally held, that Kunwar Singh organised 'the war of independence', or joined the mutinous sepoys out of a spirit of liberating the motherland. Even if we disbelieve the alleged threat held out by the sepoys to the servants of Kunwar Singh, the very fact that such a report was current goes definitely against the assumption that Kunwar Singh was the principal organiser of the rebellion. At least even his close associates did not look upon him in that light. It is not unlikely that he was forced by the sepoys to join them. But the best interpretation that we can offer of his action is that he had his grievances against the British and seized the mutiny as a good opportunity to pay off his old scores against them, and at the same time to retrieve his position as best he could.

But whatever might have been the motive or inspiration of Kunwar Singh in casting his lot with the mutinous sepoys,

we cannot withhold our praise and admiration for the man, who, at the advanced age of seventy, thus deliberately chose a course, the danger and arduous character of which nobody perhaps better understood than he himself. Still more amazing is his display of valour, courage, military skill and strategy, described above, particularly when we remember that he had no regular military training or practice.

2. MAULAVI AHMADULLA

One of the important leaders, though not generally regarded as such, was Maulavi Ahmadulla of Fyzabad, always referred to by the English writers simply as Maulavi. He was a native of Arcot in the Madras Presidency, and his personal name is written differently as Ahmad Ali Shaw, Ahmadulla and Maulavi Sekandar Saha. Of his early life and activities we do not know anything. Early in January, 1857, an incendiary address, written in Hindusthani, was placarded at Madras, calling upon all true believers to rise against the English infidels, and drive them from India. It declared that the English "had now abandoned all principles of justice and were bent on appropriating the possessions of the Mahomedans, and that there was but one way of resisting their encroachments—a holy war."[19] It is highly probable that this was a handiwork of the Maulavi or his party. But whatever that may be, the Maulavi soon turned his attention to North India. He made a wide tour, everywhere preaching a *jihad* or religious war against the Kafirs, and established his disciples in various localities. He arrived with some armed followers at Lakhnau on 17th January, 1857, and "preached war against the infidels—at the same time distributing proclamations calling upon the faithful, and even the Hindus, to arise, or be ever fallen"[20] In February, 1857, the Maulavi entered the city of Fyzabad in some degree of state with horses, camels, and armed followers. Here, also, he preached *jihad* against the English for a few days. But the Magistrate having come to know of his dangerous acti-

vities from his *chaprasi*, issued an warrant for his arrest. The Maulavi was asked to cease preaching *jihad* and deposit with the magistrate the arms possessed by him and his followers on condition that they would be returned when they leave the city. This the Maulavi refused, and a Company of infantry was sent against him. Failing to surprise the party the soldiers attacked them *vi-et-armis*. They fought bravely and wounded several sepoys and their English officer. The Maulavi fought stubbornly till all his followers, except two, were shot down. These two, as well as the Maulavi, were severely wounded and captured. As it was not considered safe to keep such dangerous persons in the ordinary jail of the city, they were confined under a guard at the cantonments. This proved lucky for the Maulavi, for as soon as the sepoys of the cantonments mutinied he effected his escape along with his followers.[21]

According to Ball,[22] this incident took place at Lakhnau. But Hutchinson, on whose authority the above account is based, was himself at Fyzabad at the time, and his statement is therefore more reliable. He remarks that there was no outward sign of sympathy for the Maulavi and his incarceration did not alter in the least people's attitude towards the Europeans. "Fyzabad," he observes, "remained a loyal city until the mutineers, hunting for British officers through its streets, convinced the people that our rule had indeed passed away."[23]

After his escape from the cantonments Ahmadulla became the confidential friend of the Begam of Lakhnau and the trusted leader of a large body of the disaffected people in Awadh. But very little that is authentic is known of his activities during the early days of the Mutiny.

Of his subsequent career we possess more definite information. He took an active part in the siege of Lakhnau, and organised repeated assaults, as noted above. Unfortunately his plans, though skilfully made and heroically carried out so far as he was concerned, were foiled by the

indifference or slackness of other parties. Indeed, dissensions broke out among the rebel Chiefs and, on one occasion, the troops of the Maulavi came to blows with those of the Begam in which about a hundred men were killed. The Maulavi was imprisoned by the Begam's party, but escaped after a short time and regained his ascendancy.

It may be added that even after the capture of Lakhnau by the British, the Maulavi "still remained with strange pertinacity in the doomed city" till May 21.[24] He then placed himself at the head of the body of sepoys who had fled from Lakhnau. His subsequent campaigns in Rohilkhand and tragic death have already been noted above. His capacity as a military leader has elicited high praise from the English writers. Malleson remarks that "no other man could boast that he had twice foiled Sir Colin Campbell in the field".[25] Holmes also pays a high tribute to him and describes him as "probably the most capable, as he was certainly the most determined of the men who fought against us in the Indian Mutiny."[26] These tributes are fully deserved by the Maulavi. He, alone, among all the so-called leaders of the great movement, had no personal interest to serve and no personal grievance against the British Government to serve as an incentive to rebellion. Yet, from the very beginning to the end, he was an uncompromising and active enemy of the British. He never cherished any friendly feeling for the British, nor pretended any such sentiment. Animated by a sincere feeling of hostility against the British, he openly preached a violent crusade against the British Raj and missed no opportunity of inciting the peoples and sepoys against it. His personal courage was proved by the gallant resistance which he offered to the troops who had come to capture him.

It is difficult to improve upon the following well-deserved tribute which Malleson pays to him:

"If a patriot is a man who plots and fights for the independence, wrongfully destroyed, of his native country, then most certainly the Maulavi was a true patriot. He had not stained

his sword by assassination, he had connived at no murders ; he had fought manfully, honourably, and stubbornly in the field against the strangers who had seized his country, and his memory is entitled to the respect of the brave and the true-hearted of all nations."[27]

It is an irony of fate that such a brave patriotic son of India should die, not by the hands of the enemy whom he had wronged, but by those of his own countrymen whom he served so well.

FOOTNOTES

1. The age is given as about 70 by Sen (p. 255) and 75 in the Freedom—Bihar, I. 27
2. See pp. 89-90, 140.
3. William Tayler, *Thirty-eight years in India* (1882), Vol. II. p. 193.
4. K, III. 100 f.n.
5. Holmes, 187.
6. These letters are quoted in K, III. 98.
7. Sen, 255 ff.
8. *Freedom-Bihar*, I. 26.
9. *SB*-II, 167.
10. *Freedom-Bihar*, I. 26.
11. Sen, 257.
12. *SB*-II, 170.
13. K, III. 100, f.n.
14. *SB*-II, 170, f.n. 1.
15. Neither this, nor the evidence of Nishan Singh is mentioned in the big three-volume official publication, *Freedom-Bihar*.
16. *SB*-II, 168-9.
16a. *PIHRC*, XXX, Part II, p. 41.
17. *Patna University Journal*, VIII (1954). Dr. Sen has satisfactorily explained how Kunwar Singh could join the mutinous sepoys at Arrah with his retainers at a very short notice.
18. See pp. 173 ff.
19. Ball, I. 39.
20. Ibid, 40.

21. Hutchinson, 22-3. He describes the Maulavi as a native of Arcot. For other views, cf. K, II. 261 ; M, II. 541.

22. Op. cit. Malleson also holds the same view (Mal. 18).

23. Hutchinson, 23.

24. Holmes, 431.

25. M, II. 542.

26. Holmes, 506.

27. M, II. 544.

CHAPTER VI

THE SEPOYS

Although relegated to the last in the list of heroes, the sepoys, in a sense, were the chief actors in the great drama which it is the object of this book to unfold. They set the stage on which other persons played leading parts, and their role, though humble, kept the others in sustained activity. It is necessary, therefore, to make a general review of them. But the task is not an easy one. For it is difficult to form conclusions which will apply even in a general way to the vast and heterogeneous body which formed the Bengal Army. Besides, the sepoys themselves have not left behind any kind of records to explain their ideas and activities, and we are dependent for this mostly on the accounts of their most deadly enemies, the English, whom they had so grievously wronged. We must bear this in mind before passing any final judgement on them, and never forget that whatever conclusions we draw, are based on practically *ex-parte* evidence. Subject to this general caution, we may proceed to make a general review on the basis of such evidence as has reached us.

The sepoys had many grievances against the British Government and, on several occasions in the past, broke out into open mutiny, though these were local affairs and never developed into a general rebellion. To these reference has been made above.[1] There is, however, no doubt, that the most serious of these grievances was the interference with their time-honoured religious practices and social customs and conventions. Somehow or other there was a deep-rooted conviction in the minds of many of them that it was the deliberate object of the British to convert them by direct or indirect means to Christianity. This is the reason why the

question of greased cartridge produced a conflagration. There is no doubt that though other considerations might have prevailed, there was a number of sepoys who were actuated by the noble object of dying for the defence of their faith and religion which they prized above everything else in life. Mrs. Coopland tells a story which is worth quoting in this connection. Referring to a ghastly scene of blowing up the sepoys from the mouth of guns, she says: "It was a long process, fastening them to the guns; and an officer having said to a sepoy, as the latter was being tied on, "it is your turn now," the sepoy replied calmly: "In one moment I shall be happy in paradise."[2] Such religious enthusiasm—call it frenzy if you like—sustained the spirit of many sepoys who risked everything in life and fearlessly embraced death for what they believed to be the cause of religion. They were inspired by a sense of the highest duty, due performance of which was sure to lead them to heaven. To the same consideration may be ascribed the valour and courage which many sepoys displayed in the battlefield and drew unstinted praise from their bitterest opponents, the English.

But these commendable characteristics should not hide from our view the ignoble features in the character and conduct of the sepoys. The first and foremost was their inhuman cruelty to the English. As noted above, they set the example of not only killing the officers, but even mercilessly massacring their wives and children. Sometimes their brutality was carried to such an excess that they cut the children before their mothers' eyes. These are so much against the spirit of humanity for which India has justly been famous, that we cannot help accusing the sepoys of tarnishing the fame of Indian culture. The memory is particularly painful when we remember that the sepoys consisted mostly of high class Brahmins. It is likely that the Goonda element which joined the sepoys was partly, or even mainly, responsible for these cruel acts. But the sepoys themselves were equally responsible for this. One of their first acts after the mutiny was to

release the prisoners from jail, and this love of association with the scum of the people throws a lurid light on their mentality and objective. The fact is that the sepoys shared with the Indians in general a feeling of intense hatred against the British. Mrs. Coopland tells us that "an officer, when trying the prisoners, asked a sepoy why they killed women and children. The man replied, when you kill a snake, you kill its young."[3] This no doubt explains, but hardly excuses, the infamous acts and conduct of the sepoys.

Reference has been made above to the forcible extortion of money by the sepoys from the Rani of Jhansi, and they even set up a rival candidate for the throne of Jhansi so that one might outbid the other for gaining their support.[4] Indeed the greed of the sepoys carried them to such an excess that many of them descended to the level of gangsters, plundering innocent Indian wayfarers on their way. Many such stories are on record. Tantia Topi tells us in his narrative, in a matter of fact way, how his men plundered a village called Chikla, and again at Banswara "plundered sixteen or seventeen camel-loads of cloth belonging to a *mahajan* which they found there."[4a] The greed of the sepoys was so conspicuous and scandalous that many began to doubt whether the cry of greased cartridges was not merely a pretext to serve their selfish ends. Thus Ahsanulla gave it as his opinion that the native troops mutinied in the hope of worldly gain and the admixture of religion was only to disguise their real object. They put the emphasis on the cartridge, for it involved a religious element which would deceive the people in making them believe that the sepoys were fighting for religion. If they were really fighting for religion, he argued, they would not have plundered the houses and property of the people, nor would they have oppressed and injured them, but would have fought only against the British Government.[5]

The following statement of Mainuddin is most revealing in this connection:

"Day by day *perwanahs* were extorted from the King,

addressed to particular regiments of the British Indian army, promising monthly salaries of thirty rupees to infantry soldiers and fifty to cavalry, if they would join the King's Army. In every instance the King's *perwanah* had the effect of causing the soldiers to mutiny and make their way to Delhi."[5a]

As usually happens, evil passions, once aroused, do not remain confined to their immediate objective. The spirit of cruelty and indiscipline which characterised the beginnings of the mutiny was displayed throughout by the sepoys. We can form a very fair idea of this from the very vivid account that we possess of the state of Delhi during the siege written by two Indians, one a Hindu and another a Muslim, who were in the city at the time. There is no reason to doubt the general truth of their narrative, for it is supported by the statements of Chunilal, Bahadur Shah and Ahsanulla,[6] and also by the contemporary records of the British whose spies supplied them daily with the news of the happenings inside Delhi. The picture of greed and indiscipline on the part of the sepoys which these narratives hold out before us is a very very sad commentary on the character and conduct of the average sepoy and the class as a whole. The shops were looted, the inhabitants, all of them Indian, were indiscriminately plundered, and very scant respect—not to put it more bluntly—was shown to Bahadur Shah whom they themselves had chosen to be their ruler. This will be evident frcm the passages quoted above[7] in connection with Bahadur Shah, and a few more may be added.

Bahadur Shah alleges in his written statement during his trial,[8] that the sepoys paid no respect to him nor acknowledged his authority; they threatened to depose him, kill his queen and other officials, and one day even went to the house of the queen Zinnat Mahal, intending to plunder it, but did not succeed in breaking open the door. Bahadur Shah says he was virtually the prisoner of the sepoys, who had set up a

council of their own in which all matters were discussed and line of action decided upon. But there was no order or discipline among them. "Thus," contiuues Bahadur Shah, "without my knowledge or orders, they plundered, not only many individuals, but several entire streets, plundering, robbing, killing and imprisoning all they chose; and forcibly extorting whatever sums of money they thought fit from the merchants and other respectable residents of the city, and appropriating such exactions to their own private purposes ...I did whatever they required, otherwise they would immediately have killed me. This is universally known." Indeed things came to such a pass that Bahadur Shah, disgusted of his life, resolved to adopt the garb of a religious mendicant and go to Mecca. But the sepoys would not allow him to go.

Mainuddin writes: "The rebels were becoming clamarous for pay. They were really laden with money, but they wished to extort as much more as they could. They threatened to leave the King's service unless paid..."[9] Jiwanlal records in his diary on May 15, i.e. only four days after the Mutiny had broken out in Delhi: "News was received that the mutineers were intimidating the city people, and that 200 troopers, having plundered a quantity of money, had deserted and gone off to their homes, and had in turn been attacked by the Gujars and plundered."[10]

The general condition of the city on May 12 is thus described by Jiwanlal: "From house to house the unwilling King was distracted by cries and petitions, now from the servants of Europeans who had been murdered, now from the shopkeepers whose shops had been plundered, now from the higher classes whose houses had been broken into—all looked to the King for immediate redress. Appeals were made to him to repress the plunder and rapine now common throughout the city."[11] On May 15 he writes:

"Several respectable men were seized and made to carry burdens to intimidate them and extort money. Such were

their sufferings that the better class of city people offered prayers this day for the speedy advent of the English and for the defeat of the rebels. All valuable property had by this time been buried, and a private police force had been raised by the better class of citizens to protect themselves and their property from plunder and violence."[11]

We find the following entry in Jiwanlal's diary under the date, May 23:

"Seeing the atrocities the mutineers were committing in the city, Hakim Ahsanulla Khan induced the King to issue an order commanding the troops to leave the city, on the ground that they would only plunder and cause blood to be shed."[12]

"The soldiers plundered the house of Kanheyal Lal of Hyderabad, a severe fight having first taken place between the retainers of Kanheyal and the mutineers.

"Nawab Mir Ahmad Ali Khan, under instructions from the King, issued orders to seize all the bankers and wealthy men of the city—particularly those favourable to the English—and to extort money from them for the pay of mutineers. Mirza Mahommed Ali Bey was appointed tehsildar of the Mehrowli. Jiwan Lal's garden and house were this day plundered by the soldiers, of property to the value of 2,000 rupees, on suspicion of his being in communication with the English."[13]

Any one who reads these narratives may well wonder whether Delhi was in the hands of foreign enemy or defended by soldiers fighting the battle of Indian independence.

As noted above, greed was the besetting sin of the mutineers. Immediately after breaking out into mutiny the sepoys turned their attention to the looting of the local treasury. It was natural that the division of the spoil would create bitterness among the sepoys themselves. Some idea of this may be obtained from the following entry in the diary of Munshi Jiwanlal of Delhi under the date, May 28:

"Order was issued to-day to pay the mutineers: this was done at the request of Mahbub Ali Khan: deductions were

ordered to be made on account of the sums already paid to them; nine for sowars and seven for infantry was fixed. A great uproar ensued. "The cavalry demanded Rs. 30 for their pay, and no deduction for charges paid. The Subahdars of the Delhi Regiment accepted Rs. 7 as their pay. A violent abusive altercation followed between the Meerut cavalry and the mutineers of the Delhi regiments. The Meerut sowars accused the Delhi regiments of having enriched themselves by plunder, whereas the Meerut men had by their good behaviour reaped nothing by plunder and robbery. They refused to receive Rs. 9. The foot Sepoys replied that the Meerut men were rebellious and utterly bad. Not only had they been the first to mutiny and kill their officers, whose salt they had eaten—and led others to do likewise—but they were desirous to quarrel and fight with their own countrymen. The Delhi Sepoys said they repented of their great fault—that they had not done their duty and blown them from their guns when they first reached Delhi. Fierce passions were so raised, that at one time there was every probability of a serious encounter. The King's servants rushed in between the parties, and with great efforts quieted both sides, Mahbub Ali Khan promising the cavalry Rs. 20 pay per mensem."[14]

We possess a long statement of Ahsanulla[15] made immediately after the fall of Delhi. It not only refers to plundering and burning inside the city of Delhi, but also cites instances of the sepoys forcibly collecting money in the neighbourhood. He refers to the report of "women killing themselves to be saved from dishonour," and, what is worse still, adds that investigation proved the correctness of this report. He further says that information reached the King that the quarter inhabited by the Dasas (a caste of Baniya) was being plundered and that many of them had been shot down by the sepoys.

But such conduct of the sepoys was not confined to Delhi. They illtreated the Indians all over the country, and the English-educated classes, particularly the Bengalis, formed

the chief target of their violence. Rajnarayan Basu, the maternal grandfather of Shri Arabinda, and usually referred to as the father of nationalism in Bengal, writes in his autobiography that all were in perpetual dread of the mutiny of the sepoys. Many Bengali gentlemen of Midnapore, where he was the Headmaster of a school, kept boats ready so that they might escape at the first signs of the mutiny. Rajnarayan Babu himself sent his family to Calcutta for safety. One day when the sepoys came out in a procession—which later proved to be a religious one—the boys were seized with terror and hid themselves under tables and benches.[16] That such apprehensions were not unfounded or imaginary is shown by the diary of another Bengali gentleman of a high family who happened to be in Varanasi at the time when the mutiny broke out there. He refers to the sufferings of the Bengali and other inhabitants of various localities at the hands of the mutinous sepoys.[17]

We possess a long narrative of the mutiny at Bareilly written by Durgadas Bandyopadhyaya, a Bengali gentleman who was present there and had ample opportunities of seeing things for himself and securing information from reliable sources. Here we find almost an exact replica of the tales of woe and misery suffered by the people at the hands of the sepoys as witnessed at Delhi by Munshi Jiwanlal and Mainuddin Khan. Bahadur Khan, the nominal ruler of Bareilly, was in a helpless condition like Bahadur Shah, and Bakht Khan wielded the real power. There was no discipline among the sepoys, who were engaged in indiscriminately looting the shops and plundering the rich and poor alike. As in Delhi, many sepoys amassed a rich booty and returned home. Most cruel tortures were applied to extort money from the people. The Hindus and Muslims were forced to reveal their hidden treasure by the threat of being forced to take respectively the flesh of cows and pigs. Men were made to sit on boiling cauldrons with the same object. Plunder, theft, robbery and rape were the order of the day. A circum-

stantial narrative of the treatment accorded to a rich woman of the town, named Panna, makes most painful reading. The demon of communalism also raised its head. The Muslims spat over the Hindus and openly defiled their houses by sprinkling them with cows' blood and placing cows' bones within the compounds. Concrete instances are given where Hindu sepoys came into clash with the Muslim hooligans engaged in defiling Hindu houses, and a communal riot ensued. The Hindus, oppressed by the Muslims, were depressed at the success of the mutiny, and daily offered prayers to God for the return of the English. Even many Muslims wanted the English to return. Large number of persons were recruited as mercenaries and joined the mutineers on payment of Rs. 5, 6, or 7 per month. The mutineers were very hard on the Bengali residents of Bareilly. Many of them were whipped and seven were condemned to death, merely on suspicion and without any regular charge being framed against them.[18]

Anyone who reads this account will get a bitter taste of the "National War of Indian Independence" and would wonder whether the sepoys were fighters for freedom or victorious and vicious forces of a conqueror let loose upon the helpless conquered population. It may be argued that these stories, written by men who had grievances against the sepoys, were highly exaggerated. But Tantia Topi, himself a rebel and a leader of the sepoys, has referred to similar activities of the sepoys even while they were flying before the English troops. Reference has been made above[19] to their wanton acts of loot and plunder. Tantia further says, with reference to their burning Government buildings, "that the Rao Sahib forbade their doing so, but they would not obey him." They seized Chaprasis and Chaukidars and hanged some of them. The manner in which Tantia refers to their nefarious deeds in his statement shows that these were more or less natural to them. Reference may also be made to what Tantia himself evidently regarded as legitimate. He fought with the Raja of Patan,

defeated him. and surrounded his palace, and then Rao Sahib imposed upon the Raja a fine of twenty-five lakhs of rupees. Because the people of Isaogarh refused supplies, Tantia attacked the place and plundered it.[20] All these more or less corroborate the picture of the sepoys painted by Jiwanlal and Durgadas. Besides, a comparison of the accounts of Delhi and Bareilly, written by these two men unknown to each other and living in distant localities, would convince any impartial observer that there must be substantial truth behind them. For falsehoods, invented by two different persons, could not possibly show such a striking resemblance even in minute details, and the pictures are too realistic to be dismissed as pure fabrications. It is a very significant fact that all the contemporary accounts by the Indians—including Bahadur Shah, Nana, Rani of Jhansi and Tantia Topi, the so-called leaders of the "War of Independence"—represent the actual sepoys as very different from the idealised picture of brave patriots fighting for their country's freedom which has been drawn by misplaced sentiments of a later age. These reflections do not mean, of course, that there were no individual exceptions. But in judging of a movement we have to make an estimate of the average quality rather than exceptional merit.

FOOTNOTES

1. See pp. 33 ff.
2. Coopland, 233.
3. Ibid. 234.
4. Above, pp. 276, 283.
4a. Cf. Tantia's statement quoted above, pp. 302-3.
5. Evidence of Ahsanulla in *TB*, 246 ff.
5a. *CTM*., 60.
6. These statements were made during the trial of Bahadur Shah, cf. *TB*.
7. *Cf*. pp. 236 ff.
8. *TB*. 206 ff.
9. *CTM*., 65.
10. Ibid. 92.

11. Ibid. 86

11a. Ibid. 92-3

12. Ibid. 101-2. But as Jiwanlal says elsewhere: "The mutineers would neither leave the city nor protect it. They remained only for plunder and violence"

13. Ibid. 101-2.

14. Ibid. 104-5.

15. Ms. L. Vol. 725, pp. 25-147. For the quotations, cf pp. 66, 85.

16. *Autobiography* of Rajnarayan Basu (in Bengali) pp. 101-3.

17. *Tirthabhraman* (in Bengali) by Jadunath Sarvadhikary. Published by Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Calcutta.

18. *BD.*, pp. 146, 206, 211, 215-216, 343, 459.

19. Pp. 325 ff.

20. Cf. the statement of Tantia, quoted above, on pp. 300 ff.

CHAPTER I

WAS THERE A CONSPIRACY IN 1857 ?

1. THE ALLEGED CONSPIRACY

We have passed in review all the relevant facts, so far known to us, regarding the activities of the important leaders as well as the sepoys which may throw any light on the existence of a pre-concerted conspiracy for rebellion against the British Government. We may now pause and consider the bearing of all this evidence on the main point at issue, namely the nature of the great outbreak of 1857. At the very outset it is necessary to emphasize the fact that in the absence of all records from Indian side—sepoys as well as their so-called leaders—the evidence so far available to us cannot be regarded as sufficient nor of such a nature as would enable us to arrive at any definite and final conclusion on this subject. It is very likely that much that is relevant to the issue is not yet known to us, and will perhaps never be known. For the present, therefore, all that we can do is to find out what conclusion can be reasonably deduced from the evidence at our disposal.

The first point that calls for consideration is whether the outbreak of 1857 was the result of an organised conspiracy.

Among the British historians of the Mutiny, Malleson held the most definite view about the conspiracy and conceived a very clear picture of it in his mind.[1] The chief conspirators, in his opinion, were Maulavi Ahmadulla of Faizabad, Nana Sahib, and the Rani of Jhansi, who had entered into negotiations before the explosion of 1857. He then adds: "Such, then, were the conspirators. The inhabitants of Oudh, directed mainly by the Maulavi and a lady of the royal House known as the Begum, the inhabitants of the North-west

Provinces, goaded into bitter hostility by the action of the Thomasonian system, and the Rani of Jhansi".[2] Why the name of Nana was omitted from this list, though he is expressly mentioned as carrying on secret negotiations with the Maulavi and the Rani of Jhansi, only in the previous sentence, is not quite clear. Malleson proceeds: "The Executive Council of this conspiracy had arranged, in the beginning of 1857, to act upon the sipahis by means of the greased cartridge, upon the inhabitants of the rural districts by the dissemination of chapatis. This dissemination was intended as a warning that the rising was imminent. It was further decided that the rising of the sipahis should be simultaneous, and more than once the actual date was fixed. Providentially something always happened to prevent the explosion on that day".[3]

Nothing illustrates more strikingly the obsession of Malleson with the idea of conspiracy than his reference to the 'Executive Council'. He does not tell us when and by whom it was elected. It was presumably an All-India body, but its existence, so far as we know, has hitherto not been even suspected by, far less known to, anybody else. Malleson makes no reference to his source of information on such an important issue. But he pretends to know even the principles of action laid down by the Council. For he tells us, among other things, that "the astute men who had fomented the ill feeling against the British......had laid down as a cardinal principle that there were to be no isolated outbreaks and that the explosion should take place on the same day all over the Bengal Presidency".

Apart from the fact that there is no reliable evidence in support of Malleson's theory of a general conspiracy, it would appear from what has been said above about the Rani of Jhansi, that it is impossible to believe in her participation in such a conspiracy without the strongest positive evidence, which is altogether lacking. The possibility of Nana being a

member of the conspiracy will be discussed presently. As regards the *chapati* being the symbol of the rising, we shall see, in section 5 of this chapter, that the most careful inquiry failed to elicit its real meaning and purpose, and as even the contemporaries held the most divergent opinions about its object, it could not certainly serve the purpose which Malleson had in view.

As regards Maulavi Ahmadulla, we have already stated all the facts about him known to us. Even accepting as true what Malleson regards as proved facts, his general conclusions are not supported by them. For example, what is the evidence for the very important assertion that the Maulavi "was selected by the discontented in Oudh" to sow seeds of rebellion throughout India?[4] "The discontented in Oudh" is a very vague term. There were too many of them, belonging to all grades of people from the members of the ruling family to the petty tenant. We are not told by what process they, or even a definite section of them, selected this Maulavi for the very hazardous and ambitious task of sowing seeds of rebellion *throughout India*. As regards the method by which it was carried out, Malleson says that the Maulavi "devised the scheme known as the *chapati* scheme", "the circulation of which amongst the rural population of the North-West Provinces would notify to them that a great rising would take place on the first favourable opportunity".[5] Here, again, Malleson does not tell us how he solved the mysterious problem of the *chapatis* which has baffled all other persons, both contemporary and later.

Malleson does not seem to possess a very definite idea about the role of the Maulavi. In the passage quoted above the Maulavi is represented as being selected by the 'discontented in Oudh'. A few lines above, he says: "Who all the active conspirators were may probably never be known. One of them, there can be no question", was the Maulavi.[6] Immediately after the passage quoted above he observes about

the Maulavi: "that this man was the brain and the hand of the conspiracy there can, I think, be little doubt."[7] Elsewhere he refers to the "secret agents of the vast conspiracy hatched by the Maulavi of Faizabad and his associates." It is difficult to understand from these different statements whether Malleson regarded the Maulavi as the principal conspirator or a mere instrument chosen by others. Elsewhere, as noted above, Malleson refers to Nana Sahib and the Rani of Jhansi also as the conspirators.

It is needless to add that there is no evidence in support of Malleson's view of the representative character of the Maulavi,[8] although there is no doubt that he played an important role during the Mutiny. Nor is there any evidence that he was ever in league with Nana or the Rani of Jhansi.

2, NANA SAHIB AS ORGANISER OF THE CONSPIRACY

We may next discuss the general belief that Nana Sahib organised the rebellion which broke out in 1857. This has gained a great weight from the statement made by Kaye in his classical work on Indian Mutiny from which we quote the following passage:—

"For months, for years indeed, ever since the failure of the mission to England had been apparent, they (Nana and Azimulla) had been quietly spreading their network of intrigue all over the country. From one native Court to another native Court, from one extremity to another of the great continent of India, the agents of the Nana Sahib had passed with overtures and invitations discreetly, perhaps mysteriously, worded, to Princes and Chiefs of different races and religions, but most hopefully of all to the Mahrattas."[9] In a footnote Kaye remarks: "By those who systematically reject Native evidence, all this may be regarded as nothing but unsubstantial surmise. But there is nothing in my mind more substantiated than the complicity of Nana Sahib in widespread intrigues before the outbreak of the Mutiny. The concurrent testimony

of witnesses examined in parts of the country widely distinct from each other takes this story altogether out of the regions of the conjectural."[10]

Shri Savarkar in his book "*The Indian War of Independence*"[11] has also referred to similar activities of Nana Sahib. Thus he says: "A little before 1856 Nana began to send missionaries all over India to initiate people into this political ideal. In addition to sending missionaries to awaken the people Nana also sent tried and able men to the different princes from Delhi to Mysore, to fill their minds with the glorious ideal of the United States of India and to induce them to join in the Revolution." He further says that "direct evidence is available that messengers and letters from Nana were sent to the States of Kolhapur and Patwardhan, to the Kings in Oudh, the princes in Bundelkhand, and others."[11a]

The view that Nana Sahib organised a big conspiracy rests principally upon the statement of Sitaram Bawa made before H. B. Devereux, Judicial Commissioner of Mysore, on January 18, 1858, and the following days. It is a long document of nearly fifty pages.[12] Kaye has quoted only a few extracts from it, but these do not convey an accurate idea of the nature and reliability of the statement. It is therefore necessary to refer to it at some length. Six passages, marked A, B, C. D, E, F, for conveniently referring to them in the discussion that follows, are quoted from this statement.

A

Sitaram mentions "the Sorapoor Rajah, the Sattara Rajah, the Kolahpur Rajah, the Deshmook of Akulkote, the great Mooktian at Hyderabad", and then adds: "The Mysore Rajah used to tell these people that with the help of God, all would be well (i.e. they would be restored to their rule and kingdom). Such correspondence has been going on for about eight months......The Rajah used to write thus: 'a great army is soon coming this way......Bájee Row's son and Holkar and other great princes had all joined together, and that as soon

as they advanced all would join, the old dynasties would be restored, and all would be placed on their thrones......'

"The Baija Bhaiee was the person who first commenced this conspiracy about twenty years ago, at the time she was taken from Gwalior and kept at Nasik."[12a]

(It appears from what follows that the above was not connected, directly, with the conspiracy of 1857, which was Raja of Satara's).

B

"Then Bajee Rao died at Bithoor. He left a widow and an adopted son named Nana Sahib, who was always a worthless and not very clever fellow, and never would have been anything but for the tuition of his Gooroo, Dassa Bawa (said to have come from a place called Kalee Dhar, beyond Kangra, this side of Jummoo). Three years ago, or perhaps a month less, Nana Sahib gave the Gooroo, Dassa Bawa, a sunnud, granting a five-lakh jaghir and five nachatras, because Dassa Bawa had told him that he would become as powerful as the Peishwah had once been; and the sunnud was to take effect when he came into power. Dassa Bawa then made a Hunooman horoscope of eight angles. Nana then, after seven days of prayer, went to sleep on the horoscope, and Hunooman having revealed to him that he would be victorious, he felt that the truth of the prediction had been confirmed, and at once presented Dassa Bawa with twenty-five thousand rupees' worth of jewels. Dassa Bawa then went to Nepaul. Dassa Bawa is a person who has helped and advised the Nana throughout. The Nana gives him much money......"[13]

C

"All this was communicated by the Nana to Baija Bhaiee and to all the other states—to Holkar, Scindia, Assam (or Burma), Jeypoor, Joudpoor, Kolah Boonder—Jhalawar—Rewah—Baroda—Kutch—Bhooj—Nagpur, to the Ghonds of Chanda (and doubtless Sambalpur) to Hyderabad, Sorapoor,

Kolapore, Sattara, Indore,—in fact he did not leave out any place where there was native prince. He wrote to all......He (Raja of Travancore) is the only one who did not at all agree ......Nana Sahib wrote these letters about three years ago, at intervals, a short time, perhaps two or three months, previous to the annexation of Oudh. But at first he got no answers. Nobody had any hope. After the annexation he wrote still more, and then the Soukars of Lucknow joined in his views. Maun Singh, who is the chief of the Poorbeah, or Poordusee, joined. Then the sepoys began to make *tajwiz* (plans) among themselves, and the Lucknow Soukars supported them. Until Oude was annexed, Nana Sahib did not get answers from any one ; but when that occurred, many began to take courage and to answer him. The plot among the sepoys first took place—the discontent about the greased cartridges. Then answers began to pour in. Golab Singh, of Jummoo, was the first to send an answer. He said that he was ready with men, money, and arms, and he sent money to Nana Sahib, through one of the Lucknow Soukars.'[14]

D

"Nana Sahib and Maun Singh communicated with the King of Delhi and it was agreed that the Padishah should be for the Mussulmans and Dewangiri for the Hindus. It was a *kuput* or deceit, an arrangement for the moment......Then the Mussulman Sirdars of Oude joined Maun Singh. The Lucknow Bandobust was a Cacha Bandobust......After the Lucknow annexation the Nana and the Mussulmans joined and wrote to Hyderabad from which place an answer came to the effect that we have no money to send you but we will make bundobust in our country. We cannot come to your assistance. The Nawab wrote this and though he said he could not assist he told them if they came to his aid (*sic*) he would join. He had not the means of helping them otherwise.........

"It was by the annexation of Oude that the Muhammadans were induced to join, and that Nana's plot began to succeed.

It was previously merely a conspiracy among the Hindu Princes and had been smouldering for a long time, but would not have come to anything had it not been for this occurrence.

"The Hindu sepoys were not previously prepared to join but when money became plentiful then matters began to wear a favourable aspect. Some of the money was obtained by Maun Singh from the Soukars and the rest was sent by Golab Singh from Jummoo. Many lakhs of rupees were obtained and although not enough for the whole business there was sufficient to begin upon and to stimulate the soldiers and armed men with hopes of more. The military classes were enticed by a promise of restoring the old times of license and they all prefer that to a regular form of Government.

"The correspondence was going on to an immense extent and letters were passing all over the country telling them not to begin yet—not to begin yet. Dassa Bawa had the conduct of the whole affairs. There was not to have been any fighting whatever. It was all to have been done in the same night by surprise and every European was to have been at once extinguished. There is no man in all Hindustan like Dassa Bawa. He is a most able man. He is 125 years old. The Meerut and Delhi outbreak was a mistake. The day of the Delhi massacre was the first day fixed but the Rawah Rajah was to help at Banares and he had not joined.'"[15]

E.

"Banares was to have been their first point in advance and from thence they were to have acted against Calcutta."[16]

F

"When Dassa Bawa went to Oojein then the Baija Bhaiee consulted with him on the subject of a rising. This happened about six years ago. She told him all her plans. He then went to Nana and told him to unite with her. It was in this way the two plots became connected."[17]

After the statement was over Sitaram Bawa was cross-examined, and gave some further information about Nana. "Nana Sahib," he said, "though always a worthless fellow, and nothing without Dassa Bawa, could never have ordered the massacre of the women and children."[18]

He continued: "Nana Sahib wrote both to Gholab Singh and to Russia and he got an answer from Russia. In that answer he was told that no assistance could be given him unless he could take and could hold Delhi but that, if he could succeed in that, then assistance would be given him to drive the English from Calcutta. The letter was sent to Jummoo, and forwarded on from thence by the hands of the people who bring almonds and fruit. The country beyond Jummoo is said to be pure Mussulman, but I do not know anything about it. First, Gholab Singh joined, and as soon as the union of the Mussalmans and Hindus was settled, several letters were sent to Russia."[19]

He was asked: "What made Nana Sahib originate this conspiracy ?" He gave the following answer:

"The Company Sirkar placed all the treasure of his father under attachment, and he wanted to gain possession of it. The people about him urged him, the opportunity offered, and he took advantage of it." When Sitaram was asked how he came to know all this, he replied: "Every person, particularly every Brahmin, is well acquainted with all this, and the fact of these letters having been written, why, every Baboo in Calcutta knew of it."[20]

This last statement is very significant. Here Sitaram openly confesses that he was merely reproducing what everybody knew, in other words, bazar gossip, and had no special source of information. It shows that the air was thick with vague rumours about various conspiracies against the British Government. Such wild rumours were characteristic of oriental countries and in India were sustained by the fact that discontented native chiefs not unoften indulged in these kinds

of loose talks of plots and conspiracies which seldom signified much and need hardly be taken seriously. Sitaram's evidence can hardly be taken to imply anything more than that many vague and wild rumours of plot against the British were afloat in the country for a good many years.

If we are to believe in Sitaram Bawa's evidence, there were four conspiracies in each of which a large number of ruling princes of India were involved. The first was begun by Baija Bai, the grandmother of the Sindhia, about the year 1837. The second was planned by the Mysore Raja after or shortly before the outbreak of the Mutiny, with the object of restoring a number of ex-ruling princes to their thrones. The Holkar, Nana Sahib and other great princes were members of this conspiracy. Then came the conspiracy of the Raja of Satara in 1857 of which the details are not given. The last was the conspiracy which resulted in the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, and the general revolt which followed.

All this raises grave suspicion about the real value of the whole evidence. Though these conspiracies were going on for about twenty years, and so many big rulers were involved, yet no other evidence has so far come to light about any of them. Nothing is known about the Raja of Mysore's great conspiracy from any other sources, and the British Government, in spite of the positive assertion of Sitaram Bawa about it, took no steps against him or even made any inquiry about it.

Fortunately we have some means of testing the statement about Baija Bai who is said to have begun the conspiracy twenty years ago, and finally matured it with the help of Nana Sahib in 1857. When the Rao Sahib, Rani of Jhansi, and Tantia Topi captured Gwalior, as stated above, the Ranis and the principal Sardars of Gwalior proceeded to the fort of Nurwa, 30 miles from Gwalior. Rao Sahib pressed the Baija Bai to come and take the charge of affairs. He wrote to her:, "All is well here. Your going from hence was not, to my

It is to be noted that Sitaram gives all the credit of organising the conspiracy to Dassa Bawa, and none to Nana. As a matter of fact, he makes no secret of his view that Nana was a worthless fellow and was entirely a tool in the hands of Dassa Bawa. This man, aged 125 years, got enormous riches from Nana by playing a trick upon him by his Hanuman horoscope, and yet he is said to have been the ablest leader in whole Hindusthan and had "the conduct of the whole affairs" in connection with the risings of the sepoys in his hands. He matured the plan of the rising with Baija Bai as early as 1851 A. D.[24] Sitaram not only knew the secret conspiracies of all the leading princes of India, but even the plans of the campaign, *viz.* the striking of the first blow at Banaras with the help of the Raja of Rewa, and then marching against Calcutta.[25]

All this grandiloquent talk of Sitaram Bawa about his knowledge of everybody and everything shows the stuff he was made of. No reliance ought to be placed on any of his statements without corroboration from other sources.

The only other evidence against Nana is furnished by the so-called diary of Nanakchand. He is said to have lived at Kanpur and kept a regular diary of events happening from day to day, beginning from May 15, 1857. A perusal of the printed English translation of Nanakchand's Diary[26] raises great suspicions as to its genuineness, and most probably the whole thing was a narrative written at a later period in the form of a Diary.[26a]

Nanakchand openly confesses that he was a bitter enemy of Nana and had actually instituted some law-suits against him. He does not try to conceal his hatred against Nana, and calls him '*badmash*' (scoundrel), of hateful memory, and gives such other opprobrious epithets, and he tells stories of his cruelty to members of his own family.

This 'loyal subject of the British,' as Nanakchand calls himself, tells us that even before the actual insurrection, he

learnt from the immediate attendants of Nana that their master (Nana) would turn a traitor and that "Nana was in the habit of saying at home that he had secured the co-operation of the soldiery and would have his revenge and would rule over that territory."

As noted above, Nana was entrusted by the British authorities with the protection of the treasury at Kanpur on May 22. Although there was some apprehension of the mutiny on the 23rd night, it proved to be a false alarm and on June 3, 'Wheeler, the local Commander, felt so much assured that he sent to Lucknow a portion of the reinforcements which he had received from Banaras.'[27] But we find the following entries in Nanakchand's Diary:—

"May 23—The cavalry and infantry had joined Nana's party and the latter were only keeping up appearances.

May 26—Submitted a full account of Nana's doings to the Magistrate. He said to me "you have all along been speaking ill of the Nana, and filing suits against him in the Civil courts; I cannot pay attention to any representation from a person so hostile to the Nana."

Every fair-minded man will agree that, whatever might have happened later, the Magistrate was certainly right in rejecting the testimony of Nanakchand, and we can do no better than follow his example.

Speaking of the preparations for the massacre, Nanakchand observes: "The troopers of the Rissala remonstrated with the Nana, and observed that it was more honourable to fight the Europeans openly. The Nana assured them that... according to his creed it was quite allowable to take false oaths at such junctures, and that when the object was to annihilate an enemy, he would not hesitate to take an oath... on the waters of the Ganges, or adopt any one of a hundred other artifices."[28]

As regards the actual massacre, we find the following entry in Nanakchand's Diary under the date, 16th July:[29]

"Nana ordered sepoys but they refused to fire on the ladies ....Order was repeated, sepoys fired in the air......Nana Badmash sent his own servants. Accordingly (names of six servants given) rushed into the prison and cut down the ladies with their swords."

The Magistrate of Kanpur disbelieved the story of Nanakchand, but English historians have accepted the whole of this part of his testimony and reconstructed the picture accordingly.

Many Indians to-day would fain believe in the statements of Sitaram Bawa and Nanakchand in their anxiety to prove that Nana organised the great rebellion against the English. They should do well to ponder, that if we accept this testimony, Nana can only be regarded as 'a worthless fellow' and 'a tool in the hands of Dassa Bawa,' a hypocrite and traitor, who deceived both the King of Delhi and the Chiefs of Avadh (Oudh), a *Badmash* (villain) and a cruel monster. It is for them to judge whether even a 'fight for independence' would redeem such a character.

But the historian's duty is clear. He cannot place any reliance on the evidence of men like Sitaram Bawa and Nanakchand. Besides, it is to be noted, that not one of the numerous ruling chiefs, to whom, according to Sitaram Bawa, Nana wrote, and who heartily responded to his proposal, joined the Mutiny or even raised his little finger to support the revolt. As regards the sepoys also, according to the generally accepted version, they approached Nana only after the outbreak of the Mutiny, and Nana's conduct, before or immediately after that event, is irreconcileable with the statements of Sitaram and Nanakchand that he had organised the mutiny of the sepoys. It is, therefore, quite clear that even if Nana had made an attempt to organise the conspiracy on

3. BAHADUR SHAH'S CONSPIRACY WITH PERSIA, RUSSIA AND THE SEPOYS.

We may now consider the question of Bahadur Shah's conspiracy with Persia. Much has been made of if by Kaye,[30] Duff, Norton, Malleson and others, in support of their theory of a general conspiracy to drive out the English from India, while others think that such a theory "has no historical basis to rest upon and does not deserve serious consideration".[30a]

We may begin by quoting a passage from a book of Syed Ahmad, who had ample opportunities of knowing Bahadur Shah's character and personality, and being himself a Muslim, is not likely to make any disparaging remark about the last of the Mughals in Delhi, unless he were convinced of its truth. Referring to Bahadur Shah's correspondence with the Shah of Persia, he observes:

"I do not consider it a matter for surprise that the ex-King of Delhi should have despatched a *firman* to the King of Persia. Such was the credulity of the former, that had anybody told him that the King of Genii, in fairyland, owed him fealty, he would unhesitatingly have believed him, and have written ten *firmans* instead of one."[31]

The beginnings of correspondence with Persia are thus described by Mukundlal, the Secretary of Bahadur Shah, in course of his evidence at the trial of the latter.

"The King of Delhi has for some two years been disaffected against the Government, and was disposed not to respect his obligations to the English. The particulars are as follows:— When Mirza Haidar Shikoh and Mirza Murid, sons of Mirza Khan Buksh, son of Mirza Sulaiman Shikoh, came here from Lucknow, they in concert with Hasan Askari, arranged and suggested to the King that he should have a letter prepared and despatched to the King of Persia. This letter, they suggested, should represent that the English had made the king a prisoner, and had put a stop to all those marks of respect to which, as King, he was entitled, and had suspended the

appointment of an heir-apparent. It was further to represent that his wishes in reference to the appointment of any particular son as heir-apparent were not attended to. Under these circumstances the letter was to request that such an understanding might be established that mutual interchanges of visits and letter might be the result. Sidi Kambar, who was one of the King's special armed retainers, was presented with Rupees 100, through Mahbub Ali Khan, for the expenses of his journey, and was despatched in the direction of Persia, with a letter that had been prepared in the King's private secretariat office. After this Mirza Haidar and his brother returned to Lucknow, and having despatched his brother Mirza Najaf, a distant relation of the King, with Mirza Bulaki, son of Mirza Musharraf-ud-din, son of Mirza Agha Jan, to Persia, reported the same to the King in writing."[32]

Further light on negotiations with Persia is thrown by a 'Petition from Muhammad Darwesh to His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, North-West Provinces,' dated 24th March, 1857, published in the proceedings of the trial of Bahadur Shah.

"Your Highness! The arrangements for the despatch of letters from the King of Delhi to the King of Persia, through the Pir-Zada Hassan Askari, have been stated in a former petition, and must have come to your knowledge. I, who am a mendicant of itinerant habits, have since learned, for a certainty, that two men, with letters from the King of Delhi through the said Hassan Askari, proceeded about three or four months ago towards Constantinople in company with a caravan going to Mecca. Hassan Askari has now assured the King of Delhi that he has certain information that the Prince Royal of Persia has fully taken possession of and occupied Bushire, and that he has entirely expelled the Christians or rather has not left one alive there, and has taken many of them prisoners, and that very soon indeed, the Persian army will advance by the way of Candahar and

Cabul towards Delhi. He told the king also that His Majesty was altogether too careless about corresponding with the King of Persia. The King then gave Hassan Askari 20 gold mohurs, and requested him speedily to despatch letters to Persia, and directed him to give the gold mohurs to the man who should take the letters, for the expenses of his journey. Hassan Askari accordingly took the money and returned to his house, and has prepared four men to carry the letters, making them assume the coloured garments of religious mendicants, and it is reported that they will leave for Persia in a day or two. The petitioner has not been able to ascertain their names. In the Palace, but more especially in the portion of it constituting the personal apartments of the King, the subject of conversation night and day is the early arrival of the Persians. Hassan Askari has, moreover, impressed the King with the belief that he has learned, through a divine revelation, that the dominion of the King of Persia will, to a certainty, extend to Delhi or rather over the whole Hindusthan, and that the splendour of the sovereignty of Delhi will again revive, as the sovereign of Persia will bestow the crown on the King."[33]

Reference may be made in this connection to a proclamation in the name of the King of Persia copies of which were put up on the walls of the Jama Masjid and at the entrances to the streets and lanes of Delhi, The substance of the proclamation is that it was a religious obligation on all true Muslims to assist the king of Persia and fight against the English. The proclamation also stated that the Persian King would very soon come to India and annex this country as a dependency.[34]

It is to be noted that the proclamation does not mention the name of Bahadur Shah, nor refers in any way to an alliance between him and the King of Persia. Further evidence about negotiations with Persia is given by Hakim Ahsanulla[35] and Jatmall.[36] They more or less corroborate the statements of Muhammad Darwesh and Mukundlal.

Jatmall refers to the belief that the King of Persia with his army would destroy the British power and restore Bahadur Shah to his throne. According to Ahsanulla "many chiefs, including Bahadur Shah, were of opinion that if the Emperor of Russia were to aid the Persians the English would be defeated and the Persians would become masters of India."

Matcalfe also makes reference to the general rumour about Russian invasion. He was informed by John Everett, a Risaldar, partly of European extraction, that about six months before, the king had sent an emissary to Russia. In his evidence at the trial of Bahadur Shah Metcalfe stated as follows:

"I know that about five or six weeks before the outbreak it was currently reported in the lines of the sepoys, and much discussed among them, that 1,00,000 Russians were coming from the North, and that the Company's Government would be destroyed, in fact the idea of Russian invasion was universally prevalent."[37]

Everett himself gave evidence as follows:

"About three days previous to the outbreak a man named Moujud who was employed in the service of Bahadur Shah for some years advised me to leave the Company's service and come over to that of the King. When asked the reason for this, he said "This hot weather you will see the Russians all over the place."[38]

Further interesting light is thrown upon this topic by the evidence of Mrs. Fleming. She related as follows what took place towards the end of April, 1857, when she visited the house of Zinnat Mahal, the Queen of Bahadur Shah, and met there his son Jawan Bakht:—

"I was sitting down with his sister-in-law, and Jawan Bakht was standing by with his wife. My own daughter Mrs. Scully was also present. I was talking with Jawan Bakht's sister-in-law, when Mrs. Scully said to me. "Mother, do you hear what this young rascal is saying; he is telling me

that in a short time he will have all the infidel English under his feet, and after that he will kill the Hindus." Hearing this I turned round to Jawan Bakht and asked him—"What is that you are saying?" He replied that he was only joking. I said if what you threaten were to be the case, your head would be taken off first. He told me that the Persians were coming to Delhi, and that when they did so, we, that is myself and daughter, should go to him, and he would save us. After this he left us. I think this must have occurred about the middle of April, 1857."[39]

On a careful consideration of all the facts and statements it appears that there are no good grounds to believe that there was any alliance between Bahadur Shah and the King of Persia. The utmost that can be said is that Persian aid was desired by the former, and there was a sort of vague feeling current in Delhi, at least in the higher circle, that a Persian invasion of India, backed by Russian support, was imminent. The royal family hoped that such an invasion might ruin the British. This very fact shows how little these people knew of the international situation, and what little value is to be attached to the so-called conspiracy of Bahadur Shah with Persia and Russia. It is also to be noted, that even according to the rumours, the Persian help was not for securing the independence of India from the British yoke; for the utmost that could be hoped was that Persia would conquer India and reinstate Bahadur Shah on the throne as his vassal. A large number of newspaper cuttings were produced during the trial of Bahadur Shah regarding the military preparations of Persia, and her designs against India[40] A perusal of them leaves no doubt that the Indians were very ill informed about the actual state of affairs in Persia and Russia and their relations with the British. In any event, it is difficult to take seriously the view that there was any alliance between Delhi and Persia with the object of driving away the British. If Bahadur Shah really entertained any such design we can only regard him as a man ignorant in the affairs of the world and having a very

poor statesmanship. Sir Syed Ahmad goes even further as the following remarks would show:

"Nor is there the slightest reason for thinking that the rebels in Hindustan received any aid from Russia or from Persia. As between Roman Catholics and Protestants, so between the Mussulman of Persia and of Hindustan, cordial co-operation is impossible......' [41]

We may now proceed to discuss whether Bahadur Shah had any hand in inciting the sepoys to the Mutiny. Sir Theophilus Metcalfe was asked whether the King of Delhi, his relatives or other adherents had any secret or treasonable correspondence or communication with the Company's native army at any time before the outbreak. Metcalfe answered that he was not aware of any such things.[42] Ahsanulla also said, "I never heard that the King carried on correspondence with the native troops." He further said that no scheme of winning over the native army occurred to Bahadur Shah or people in his confidence.[43] Jatmall also said that he never heard of any communication made by Bahadur Shah or his confidential agents to the native officers or sepoys.[44] Sir Syed Ahmad was also definitely of the opinion that "there was no league between the ex-king and the army."[45]

All that can be urged against him in this connection is contained in the following statement made by his ex-Secretary Mukundlal in course of his evidence:

"It is now about three years since some infantry soldiers stationed at Delhi became the disciples of the King through Mirza Ali, whose duty it was to receive and present all petitions, and also through Hamid Khan Jamadar; and on that occasion the King gave each of them a document detailing the names and order of those who had preceded him in the direct line, disciple to each other, himself included, together with a napkin dyed pink as an emblem of his blessing. The Agent of the Lieutenant-Governor hearing of this occurrence, enquired regarding it, and for the future prohibited the King's

making any more of the army his disciples. It may be said that from that day a sort of understanding was established between the army and the King. Some twenty days before the commencement of the late rebellion intelligence was received here that the troops at Meerut were about breaking out in open Mutiny but it had not been heard that they were to come here. When the troopers arrived, they first came under the windows, and told the King that they had come to him after killing all the English at Meerut, and that they would slay immediately those that were here; and they further said that they would, for the future, consider prisoner their King, and that now there was not an Englishman left in all India,—all had been slain. They further said the whole army would obey the King's orders. The King said that if they had a disposition to come, then they should prepare themselves for all consequences and if they were so prepared, they were at liberty to come and take the management of matters into their hands."

"Question:—Before the 11th of May were any proposals sent by the army to the King?

"Answer:—I do not know whether any direct proposals came to the prisoner, but the King's personal attendants sitting about the entrance to his private apartments used to converse among themselves, and say that very soon, almost immediately, the army would revolt and come to palace, when the Government of the King would be re-established, and all the old servants would be greatly promoted and advanced in position and emoluments.'

A further question elicited the fact that "they were talking in this way only four days before the outbreak.[46]

The part of this statement describing the first meeting of Bahadur Shah with the mutinous troops of Mirat, which has been discussed above,[46a] is neither full nor accurate. But even Mukundlal's statement does not prove any knowledge on the part of Bahadur Shah himself about the mutiny, far less any

conspiracy, deliberately planned by him, to excite the sepoys against the British.

It may be added that Bahadur Shah in his defence pleaded that he had no news of the mutiny of the sepoys previously to the day of their arrival at Delhi, and he had tried his best to keep out of palace the mutineers from Mirat until he was absolutely powerless.

Apart from this statement, any connection of Bahadur Shah with the conspiracy of sepoys is disproved by his demeanour on the morning of May 11, when the mutinous sepoys of Mirat arrived at Delhi, as noted above.[46b]

We may conclude without hesitation,—and the historians are unanimous on this point—that Bahadur Shah, far from inciting the sepoys to revolt, was ignorant of their mutiny till they actually arrived at Delhi. Even then he felt strong sympathy for the English. He made a last minute effort to save Douglas. This officer, shortly before his death, had sent a message to Bahadur Shah requesting him to send palanquins to remove the ladies to the Queen's apartment, and the latter did so, though too late. These were certainly humanitarian acts, and as such praiseworthy, but they indicate that he had not much sympathy or understanding with the sepoys.

It was only when the English were massacred and he was practically helpless in the matter, that he agreed to the demand of the mutineers to proclaim himself as the Emperor of India. Nothing in his conduct, since then up to the time of his trial, would even remotely lead to the belief that he organised, or was even aware of, any conspiracy to drive away the British.

On the other hand, there is some evidence to show that he forthwith sent a message to Agra to warn the British authorities there against the sepoys[47].

The view that Bahadur Shah organised a confederacy of Indian chiefs, or at least made an attempt in this direction, may thus be regarded utterly goundless[48].

4. SEPOY ORGANISATION

In view of the preceding discussion we may dismiss the idea that the sepoys were merely tools in the hands of a few conspirators. There might have been factors or agencies to excite or incite them, but the mutiny was the work of the sepoys themselves. It is, therefore, necessary to investigate whether there was any organisation among the sepoys of different localities, ard if so, what was their nature and extent.

As noted above, the mutinous sepoys at Mirat set the example of killing Europeans, burning their houses, and then marching straight to Delhi ; and this formed the general pattern of the mutinies that took place in other cantonments at later dates. *Prima facie*, all this seems to be the result of a previous understanding. This is supported by the following statement of Ahsanulla: "The Volunteer Regiment (38th N. I) of Delhi said, that before the breaking out of the Mutiny, they had leagued with the troops at Meerut, and that the latter had correspondence with the troops in all other places, so that from every cantonment troops would arrive at Delhi.

"After the defection of the native army, I understood that letters were received at Delhi, from which it was evident that they had beforehand made common cause among themselves. The mutineers at Delhi also wrote to other regiments requesting them to come over......The usual draft of letters addressed by the Delhi mutineers was this: 'So many of us have come in here, do you also, according to your promise, come over here quickly.' Before their defection the native troops had settled it among them to kill all Europeans, including women and children, in every cantonment.

'I cannot explain, in detail, the arrangements which were made by the mutineers before their defection. I consider, however, that all their plans had not been yet matured when the event took place.

"I did not hear that any particular date had been fixed for the execution of the plans of the mutineer; but I am inclined to think that none was fixed, because if there had been, allusion would have been made to the fixed time in the letters which were addressed by the Delhi mutineers to the other troops, which was not the case. I mean some such language as the following would have been used in those letters—*viz,* 'You promised to rise up on such a date, but you have not arrived yet, so that you have not kept your promise.'

"When I stated above, that 'event' took place before the plans of the mutineers had been matured, I referred to the 'event' which occurred at Meerut.

"Indeed, I consider that had the event at Meerut not taken place so soon, the plans of the mutineers and their union would have become more perfect with greater length of time.

"The breaking out of the mutiny at Meerut somewhat before the proper time may be ascribed to one of the two following causes, *viz.* either the Meerut troops were too precipitate, or the Government behaved severely towards them."[49]

Jatmall makes the following statement on this subject:—

"I heard a few days before the outbreak from some of the sepoys of the gate of the palace, that it had been arranged in case greased cartridges were pressed upon them, that the Meerut Troops were to come here, where they would be joined by the Delhi Troops, and it was said that this compact had been arranged through some Native Officers, who went over on Court-Martial duty to Meerut."[50]

On the other hand Ahsanulla disbelieves this.[51] Munshi Mohanlal also makes the following statement: "I heard from two sepoys that the mutineers at Meerut had not at first any idea of coming to Delhi. This was settled after a long discussion, when the advantages of this course (which are explained in details) appeared to be very great."[52] Sir John

Lawrence says that Mohanlal's statement was corroborated by extensive and minute inquiries. He also adds that "the general voice (of the Meerut mutineers) at first was for seeking refuge in Rohilkhand", and "that a large party of these troopers actually fled through Delhi into the Gurgaon district the very next day."[53]

It appears very probable, therefore, that there was some secret discussion among some leading figures of the sepoys in different cantonments regarding the mutiny, but the rank and file were ignorant of it.[54] They might have a vague idea of some such conspiracy going on, but had no knowledge of the details. This view is not only consonant with the very nature of a secret conspiracy of this kind, but also explains many other facts which seem to be inconsistent with a general understanding among the sepoys before the actual outbreak. The hesitant manner in which the sepoys broke out into mutiny, sometimes on a sudden impulse, or at the instigation of a ring-leader,[55] supports this view.

We possess a few records throwing light on the *modus operandi* of the organisation of the conspiracy. A letter from Nund Singh of Amritsar to Sirdar Nihal Singh of Rawalpindi, dated June 10, 1857, gives us the following information obtained by "inquiries from different sources". After referring to the disbanding of the mutinous regiments in Barrackpur, the letter continues: "All the sepoys in this country, at Kurnaul, Meerut etc. were some way or other related (to those of the disbanded regiments). (The men of the latter) wrote to the former, telling them what had occurred, and stated 'that we have on this account quitted the service, and have seen all with our own eyes. We have written this to you for your information. If you should receive these cartridges, intermarriage, and eating and drinking in common, shall cease between yourselves and us."[56]

We have also the statement of Ameen Khan, son of Kareem Khan, a sepoy of the 12th N. I. posted at Jhansi

at the time of the mutiny: "One man whose name is not known to me, a servant or a relation of some one in my regiment, brought a chit from Delhi stating that the whole army of the Bengal Presidency had mutinied, and as the Regiment stationed at Jhansi had not done so, men composing it were outcastes or had lost their faith. On the receipt of this letter the four ringleaders, above alluded to, prevailed upon their countrymen to revolt and to carry out their resolution."[57]

This is fully in keeping with the view that the general mass of the sepoys were ignorant of the conspiracy, even if there were any. It would be more proper, therefore, to speak of loose talks going on among some leading sepoys in different cantonments, or perhaps even of some vague understanding among them, about the concerted rising in case the cartridges are forced upon them, rather than any definite conspiracy on a well-conceived plan. Such confidential talks or mutual understanding among leading persons of different groups, on current problems affecting them all, are not unusual and were therefore not unlikely, but it does not appear that any definite plan or organisation was conceived, far less finalised. Indeed, it may well be doubted, whether, if the sepoys of Mirat were not suddenly provoked to rise against their officers, the plan of the mutiny would have matured at all. This is proved by the somewhat halting manner in which the sepoys rose at different places at different dates and under different circumstances, as noted above.

At the same time we should remember that the very fact that the sepoys extending over such a wide area rose at all into mutiny within a month or two, indicates some sort of previous negotiations or understanding, at least among the leaders of different cantonments. That such understanding had not progressed very far seems to be proved by the absence of any definite plan of campaign or the selection of one or more leaders to be placed in charge of it. Thus the evidence

available to us does not indicate anything more than the initial stage of a conspiracy, or in other words, some sort of loose talks and a vague understanding.

There was a large volume of public opinion, both at the time of the Mutiny and later, that the sepoys were merely tools in the hands of outside conspirators. Suspicion at first turned against the ex-King of Avadh, who was living as an exile in Garden Reach near Calcutta. Immediately after the outbreak of the Mutiny "the rumour had been gaining ground that the King of Oude, or more properly the people about him, had been tampering with the Native soldiery, and instigating the rebellion. It was currently believed that the exiles of Garden Reach were, in fact, the prime movers of the insurrection."[58]

Mr. P. J. Grant drew up a list of enemies to public order in Calcutta on June 15, 1857, which included first "the three and a half native regiments at Barrackpure and next in importance were enumerated the one, two, three (for no one knows) thousand armed men at Garden Reach or available there at any moment."[59]

One writer, who chose to remain anonymous, even went so far as to declare that "Ali Nucky Khan (Minister of Oudh) was the soul of the plot, that the plot was organised and arranged at Garden Reach is beyond a doubt. The Government of India, have, or had, in their possession proofs sufficient to convict the King of Oudh and his minister of complicity in the plan of insurrection."[60] But though the ex-King of Avadh, together with Ali Nucky Khan, was taken into custody on June 15, 1857, he was never brought to trial. A century has passed since then, and no evidence of his complicity in the insurrection has yet come to light.

Writing in 1865, the Duke of Argyll observed that "while it is possible that the dethroned King of Oude, or at least some of his ministers, had aided in this work .....there is very scanty evidence of the fact."[61] Kaye also remarks that "little

or nothing was brought to light to implicate the King in the alleged conspiracies against the British Government."[62]

But though Kaye exonerated the ex-King of Avadh in the third and last volume of his work written shortly before his death, he wrote in his first volume ; "In my mind there is no doubt of the activity, at this time, of the Oude people at Garden Reach."[63] The only evidences cited by him are a few letters of a Jamadar of the Thirty-fourth Regiment which contain nothing but abusive expressions against the British for their treatment of the King of Avadh and the two following statements ; "The second grenadiers said, in the beginning of April, 'We will go to our homes sooner than bite the blank ammunition'. The regiments were unanimous in joining the King of Oude." Again, "the soubahdars of the quarter Guard said, 'We have sided with the King of Oude, but nothing has come out of it." These statements hardly prove anything about a conspiracy. In the third volume Kaye refers to Talukdar Man Sing 'who visited the ex-King of Avadh and had a conference with him in Calcutta'. This fact was "asserted very unreservedly by a Native informant of Colonel Cavenagh, Town-Major of Fort William." The Colonel writes in his Diary on May 27, 1857: "Amir Ali asserts that Rajah Maun Singh has certainly reached Calcutta and been closetted with the King." But, as Kaye himself notes, it was proved later that Raja Man Sing was not in Calcutta at the end of May, being then kept under surveillance at Fyzabad.[64] It may be that on account of such revelations about the veracity of 'Native informants' Kaye changed his views when he wrote the third Volume. It may be added in passing that Kaye's view about Nana's conspiracy, also expressed in Volume I, rests on the same kind of evidence.

We may now discuss the question how far the mutiny of the sepoys was influenced by an organised conspiracy of outsiders. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, Malleson

held the most pronounced view in this respect. He believed that it was Maulavi Ahmadulla who discovered in the greased cartridge "the instrument which should act with certain effect on the already excited nature of the sepoys."[65] "When the conspirators (i.e. Ahmadulla, Nana, the Rani of Jhansi &c.) suddenly lighted upon the new cartridge, not only smeared, but smeared with the fat of the hog or the cow, the one hateful to the Muhammadans, the other the sacred animal of the Hindus, they recognised that they had found a weapon potent enough to rouse to action the armed men of the races which professed those religions. What could be easier than to persuade the sipahis that the greasing of the new cartridges was a well thought-out scheme to deprive the Hindu of his caste, to degrade the Muhammadan ?"[66] The Executive Council of the conspirators therefore "arranged, in the beginning of 1857, to act upon the sipahis by means of the greased cartridge, upon the inhabitants of the rural districts by the dissemination of chapatis."[67] Malleson further asserts that Maulavi Ahmadulla worked "upon the minds, already prone to discontent, of the sipahis. When the means of influencing the armed men in the service of the British Government should have been so matured that, on a given signal, they would be prepared to rise simultaneously, the circulation of chapatis amongst the rural population of the North-west Provinces would notify to them that a great rising would take place on the first favourable opportunity."[68]

There is absolutely no evidence for any of these suppositions. From what has been said above about Bahadur Shah and the Rani of Jhansi, it is certain that they had no desire or opportunity to influence the sepoys. It is not unlikely that Ahmadulla and other persons like him excited the sepoys, but that the story of greased cartridge was the instrument with which they worked upon the minds of the sepoys is hardly credible. For we possess the circumstantial narrative describing in detail how the story of the greased cartridges first came to the notice of the sepoys through a chance

conversation between one of them and a low class man. The facts stated above would indicate that the story by itself proved to be sufficient to excite them violently without any outside influence. As regards the *chapatis*, we shall see in the next section that its meaning or significance was an enigma even to the contemporaries, and most diverse opinions were entertained on this subject. In view of all this difference Malleson's very simple interpretation of it appears to be almost ridiculous. In any case something, whose meaning and object were not clear to anybody, and on which more than a dozen interpretations were put by as many contemporaries, must have certainly failed to serve the purpose of a signal for a general outbreak, even if it were intended as such.

The view of Malleson is partly supported by, and was probably mainly based upon, the long statement of Sitaram Bawa to which reference has been made above. It would appear from the passage quoted above[08a] that according to Sitaram, the sepoys were not prepared to join the conspiracy and break out into mutiny until they got plenty of money and the hope of getting more in future. They were further "enticed by a promise of restoring the old times of license and they all prefer that to a regular form of Government."

Sitaram, of course, gives the entire credit for the organisation of sepoys to Dassa Bawa whose plan was a simultaneous rising of sepoys all over India and the slaughter of all Europeans. For this purpose, we are told, letters were passing all over the country telling them "not to begin yet". So the all-powerful Dassa Bawa, aged 125, was not only leading the conspiracy of all native rulers, but also took charge of organising a simultaneous mutiny all over India.

Sitaram gave further details of the conspiracy of the sepoys, as will appear from the following questions and answers.

"Q. How and when were the Sepoys induced to join in the revolt ?

A. Not before the annexation of Oude, but before the affair of the greased cartridges, which was a mere pretext. After that Maun Singh sent four or five Poorbeahs to every regiment in the service of the Company, and by their means all communications took place. Even down at the French Rocks there were men. They were able to enlist in the cause the Poorbeahs, Hindostanees, and many Mussulmans, but in no instance did they attempt to gain over the Tamil or Telegoo Sepoys, or other Hindoos of this side of India, for they knew it would be useless. They eat differently, and do not intermarry. The Hindoos of the South have no sympathy with those of the North, whereas the Mahomedans are united in feeling throughout India. If a Hindoo is glad, nobody but his own nearest people will sympathise ; but if a Mussulman is glad, all Mussulmans rejoice.

Q. Explain what the plan of attack really was.

A. A night was to have been fixed on which, without risking anything, the whole of the European Officers were to have been killed, and the treasuries plundered. The magazines were to have been taken possession of when possible, or else blown up. But it was never intended to injure women or children. Nearly all were of one mind in the different regiments. It is not the Brahmins and great men that have destroyed helpless children, women with child, and poor women. (He spoke this with great excitement.) It was the intention to destroy your men, but it was villagers and savages who destroyed your women and children, such as Maun Singh and his Poorbeahs. Nana Sahib, though always a worthless fellow, and nothing without Dassa Bawa, could never have ordered the massacre of the women and children[69]."

Sitaram's narrative depicts the sepoys in the blackest colour possible, and represents them as incited to mutiny merely by consideration of pecuniary profit and license to do

whatever they liked, free from any restraint. But the very detailed knowledge which he seemed to possess about the most secret plan and organisation of the sepoys in a matter the least divulgence of which would ruin them, throws doubt on the whole story. Besides, when he asserts that all this was known to everybody, even to every Babu in Calcutta who had very little sympathy with the Mutiny, we can easily dismiss the account of Sitaram as nothing better than a bazar gossip, on which no reliance should be placed without corroborative evidence.

On the other hand, the story of Sitaram is definitely contradicted by Ahsanulla, as the following extracts from his evidence will show.

"I consider that no correspondence passed between the sepoys and the Native chiefs before the open mutiny of the former ; for if any had passed, allusion would have been made in the subsequent letters, addressed to the chiefs, to the circumstance, which was not the case. Moreover, if any such communication had been made, some portion of the mutinous troops would have proceeded to some of the chiefs with whom they had leagued. This also was not the case.

"I consider that the native army mutinied of their own accord, and not at the instigation of any chiefs, because in the latter case the mutineers would have either themselves proceeded to join their instigator or caused him to join them.

"The mutinous troops would not appear to have won over the people of the country, because if they had, they would have treated them with consideration, and would not have oppressed and plundered them as they did.

"The sepoys had not, before their breaking out into mutiny, united to themselves the Mussalman population of Delhi. If they had, they would not have oppressed and plundered the Mahommedans of Delhi in the manner they did.

"The abandoned classes of the city required no instigation to rise up. The confusion and disorder of the time in itself encouraged them to unite with the sepoys[70]."

Of all the Indian witnesses who deposed at the trial of Bahadur Shah, Ahsanulla seems to have been the most straightforward and best informed. Being a confidential physician of the King he had ample opportunities of knowing the facts, and his long detailed statement has a ring of truth in it. The facts and arguments contained in the above extract cannot, therefore, be lightly dismissed, and we must give due weight to his views about the conspiracy of the sepoys, in particular about their motives and organisation. From such information as he could gather he was of opinion that there was pre-concerted plot among the sepoys in different parts of the country to rise against the British. He had no personal knowledge of this plot and could not give any details. But he seems to be definite on the following points:

1. That the sepoys mutinied in the hope of material gain, and were not mainly inspired by considerations of religion or political freedom. For if so, "they would not have plundered the houses and property of the people, nor would they have oppressed and injured them, but would have fought only against the British Government "[71]

2. That the plot was confined to the sepoys and was not directed by any political leaders like Nana Sahib, Bahadur Shah, or Rani of Jhansi.

3. That the mutineers did not win over the people, and there was no understanding between the Hindu sepoys and the Mussalmans of Delhi.

4. The sepoys were joined by the riffraff in the hope of loot and plunder.

This lurid picture of the sepoys, drawn by an eminent contemporary who had ample opportunities of knowing the truth, no doubt gives a rude shock to our cherished sentiments. But

it is fully corroborated by the conduct of the sepoys at Delhi during the long period of more than four months (from May 11 to September 20, 1857) when they were absolute masters of the city. Detailed references have been made to this on the basis of accounts of the situation at Delhi written by two persons who were there, and also the written statements of the news-writer Chunilal and Bahadur Shah himself during the latter's trial.[72]

A modified view of the conspiracy of the sepoys has been given currency by Mr. Cracroft Wilson. "Carefully collating," he has written, "oral information with facts as they occurred. I am convinced that Sunday, 31st May, 1857, was the day fixed for mutiny to commence throughout the Bengal army; that there were committees of about three members in each regiment which conducted the duties of the mutiny; that the sepoys, as a body, knew nothing of the plans arranged;......... The committee conducted the correspondence and arranged the plan of operations."[73] But other authorities, fully competent to judge this question, did not believe that any plot was formed for a general mutiny. This was definitely the view of Major Williams and Sir John Lawrence. The latter points out that "not one of the numerous letters which had been intercepted, written by the sepoys, contained so much as a hint of such a plot, and that none of the faithful sepoys, none of the condemned mutineers who might have saved their lives by disclosing it, if it existed, knew anything of it.'"[74]

Lawrence advances another very cogent argument: "How is it that the people or soldiers did not rise simultaneously in insurrection? I am told that the time fixed for it was anticipated by the Meerut outbreak. But if such was the case, how came it then that the news of that outbreak was not followed by immediate insurrection? No preparation was necessary. But nothing of the kind occurred. It was only when the native troops saw how powerless we were that they resolved to convert what was a mere combination against

what they fancied to be a gross oppression into a struggle for empire."[75] Alexander, the Commissioner of Bareilly at the time of the outbreak, definitely discounts the idea of any organised conspiracy for the overthrow of the existing Government, or the establishment of one to usurp its place.[75a]

Reference has been made above to the statement of Ahsanulla in which he gives good reasons for disbelieving the plot of simultaneous military rising on a particular date. Kaye also very justly observes that "the proofs of this general combination for a simultaneous rising of the native troops are not so numerous or so convincing as to warrant the acceptance of the story as a demonstrated fact."[76] Sir Syed Ahmad, also, did not believe that there was any plot for simultaneous rising, at least among the Muslims. On the other hand, he held the view that "thousands of loyal sepoys joined the mutineers, for they knew that the Government would have no longer any faith in their fidelity and would annihilate them at the first opportunity—as Englishmen had been put to death. Accordingly they all turned unfaithful and corps after corps mutinied."[77]

The detailed account of the mutiny at different places, so far as it is known to us, negatives the idea of a planned simultaneous rising on a fixed date as well as the manipulation or engineering of the mutiny by outside influence. Even if we admit, for the sake of argument, that the sepoys of Mirat upset the pre-concerted plan by a premature rising, it stands to reason that once the mutiny had actually begun, the organisers should have fixed up another early date for such simultaneous rising. But the mutiny broke out in different places, at different times, between May 10 and the end of July, extending over a period of more than two months. Besides, the sepoys were loyal in many places long after May 10, and then broke out into mutiny, either by a sudden impulse as at Aligarh, or at the instigation of mutinous sepoys from outside, as at Jhansi.

Again, if the sepoys had really been incited to revolt by the machinations of leaders like Nana or the Rani of Jhansī—the so-called conspirators of Malleson,—they would have immediately joined these leaders, and if they failed to lead them, would have openly charged them with duplicity. But not only do we not come across any such thing but, as shown above, the leaders like Bahadur Shah, Nana, Rani of Jhansi and Kunwar Singh,—all joined the mutineers long after the first outbreak at Mirat, and in almost each case we find the sepoys practically forcing them to join their ranks.

Nothing is more surprising in the whole history of the Mutiny than that this great revolutionary movement did not throw up a single leader from the rank of the sepoys themselves. This is a severe indictment on the organisation, if there were any, and its ideals and objectives, but most probably it indicates the loose character of the organisation and the absence of any noble ideal or inspiration behind the movement.

But although there is nothing to justify the belief that there was a regular and efficient organisation of the sepoys with a definite ideal and concrete plan to destroy the British Government, there is evidence to indicate that there was some sort of understanding and secret exchange of views among different groups of them with a view to devising plans for a great rebellion against the authorities. The nature and extent of this conspiracy will perhaps never be known. But correspondence was going on for this purpose between sepoys of different and distant localities. It has been stated by some that the Post Office was burdened with correspondence exchanged between the Bengal and Bombay sepoys. How far this is a reliable information, it is difficult to say. That such letters should have been sent through Post Office strikes one as very curious. But some amount of correspondence was certainly going on, and a few instances have been quoted above.

On the whole, it appears very probable that there was secret discussion among leading sepoys in various canton-

ments, and the suggestion of a concerted rising in case the greased cartridges were forced upon them found favour with many. No definite plan or organization was adopted, and the rank and file were not yet taken into confidence, at least in many cantonments. Whether, in course of time, a full-fledged conspiracy would have been evolved out of these loose talks and vague suggestions, nobody can say, but certainly that state was not reached when the sepoys at Mirat mutinied on 10 May.

Many Europeans thought at the time that the mutiny at Mirat was a blessing in disguise, for if that sudden ebullition had not disturbed the plan of the conspirators, there would have been an organized general outbreak on a fixed date at a fixed hour, and that would have been a far greater peril to the British Empire in India. On the other hand, one might argue with equal plausibility, that the whole thing would have ended in smoke if the sepoys at Mirat had not forced the pace of the mutiny by their sudden and impulsive action. For, confidential talks, or even mutual understanding among leading sepoys in different cantonments, on current problems affecting them all, should not be regarded as an unusual thing, and there is a wide gap between such loose talks and a definite conspiracy which would demand the supreme sacrifice, on the part of the sepoys, of their lives and every thing else they held dear and near. The question of details, such as the election of a leader or leaders, which had evidently not yet been settled, might have caused a serious rift in the ranks. It is not difficult to imagine, as a possibility if not a strong probability, that while such talks were going on, the initial excitement of the sepoys would have considerably cooled down, particularly as the cartridge question was not difficult of solution, and the incipient conspiracy would die a natural death. An example is more catching than calculated deliberations, and if the events at Mirat had not set it ablaze, the smouldering flame of discontent might have run its course at no distant date.

5. CHAPATIS

The wide circulation of *chapatis* and lotuses, just before the outbreak of 1857, is regarded by many as an important evidence in favour of an organised conspiracy. The lotus is not, however, mentioned in official records.

The *chapati* (small unleavened bread) is the staple food of a large section of people in India who do not take rice. It is proved on undisputable authority that about the beginning of the year 1857, these *chapatis* were passed on from village to village over a very wide area. The method of circulation has been described by various persons. Here is a typical example: "One of the Chowkidars of Cawnpore ran to another in Fategarh, the next village, and placing in his hand two *chapatis*, directed him to make ten more of the same kind, and give two of them to each of the five nearest Chowkidars, with instructions to perform the same service." Though the distributing agencies varied, the process was very nearly the same in all cases. The circulation was sometimes remarkably quick and according to one authority ten days more than sufficed for every village Chowkidar to have received and distributed it. But this seems to be an exaggeration.

The bearers of the *chapatis* were ignorant of the source whence they originated and the object for which they were circulated. Naturally there was much speculation on this subject, but no one appeared capable of elucidating the mystery.

There is no doubt that the *chapatis* were widely distributed, practically all over Northern India and even as far as Bombay Presidency and Hyderabad. Though it attracted greater notice early in 1857 the *chapatis* were freely circulated in Central India and westward as far as Elichpur in 1856.

All available evidence indicates that whatever might have been the views of a few individuals, here and there, the distribution of *chapatis* was not at first associated with any idea of political revolution either by the Government or by

the people at large. So much so, that even if we take for granted that the *chapatis* were deliberately designed by some as a signal for the outbreak, we may safely assert that it was certainly not understood by the people in that light. It seems, therefore, to be certain that the large circulation of *chapatis* cannot be regarded as a primary or even contributory cause of the great outbreak of 1857.

It is not possible to refer to the various opinions expressed about the original source and intended object of distributing the *chapatis*. Only a few of them may be mentioned.

As regards the place of origin one view was that it came from the 'brain of Oudh conspirators at Lucknow'. According to one statement "it was generally supposed that they came from Karnal and Panipat." Another suggested a probable starting point in Bundelkhand or Nagpur.

As noted above, Malleson regarded Ahmadulla as having designed the plan of circulating *chapatis*. Others held with equal certainty that it was the doing of "miscreant Nana". Some thought that the native troops had designed the *chapatis*. Many sepoys believed that the *chapatis* were distributed by order of Government through the medium of their servants.

As regards the object some believed that it was intended as a preventive against epidemic or a propitiatory observance to avert some impending calamity. Some thought that the *chapatis* were circulated by the Government in order to force Christianity on the people. Some held the exactly opposite view, *viz*, the *chapatis* were circulated to preserve unpolluted the religion which the Government proposed to subvert. Others held that it was meant to sound a note of alarm and preparation—a forerunner of some universal popular outbreak. It was also believed that the *chapati* was a sort of charm. This is proved by the following passage in the evidence of Sitaram Bawa, mentioned above.

"The cakes in question were a *jadoo* or charm, which originated with Dassa Bawa, who told Nana Sahib that he

would make *jadoo*, and as far as these magic cakes should be carried, so far should the people be on his side. He then took the reed of the lotus, or rumul, called mukhana, and made an idol of it. He then reduced the idol to very small pills, and having made an immense number of cakes, he put a pillet in each, and as far as the cakes were carried, so far would the people determine to throw off the Company's raj. None came as far as this country."[78]

There was thus a wide diversity of opinion both among contemporaries and those who investigated into the matter in subsequent times. It may be safely inferred, therefore, that none of the views, hitherto held on the circulation of *chapatis*, merits serious consideration. It will perhaps ever remain an insoluble mystery.

Nor need we attach too much importance to it. For the phenomenon was by no means unique. The *chapatis* are said to have been similarly distributed before the Marathas invaded Northern India. According to Sir John Malcolm "there had been a mysterious circulation of sugar just before the mutiny of the Coast Army in 1806. There was also, in 1818, a very perplexing distribution of coconuts in Central India; but it subsequently appeared to have been the result of a mere accident."[79] Before the Santhal rebellion a branch of the *Sal* trees had been sent from village to village.[80] Even before the end of the Mutiny, in October 1858, there was circulation, from village to village, in the district of Chindwara, of a flag of the colour of red ochre, a coco-nut, a betel-nut, and a green betel-leaf.

It may be urged that the distribution of *chapatis on such a large scale* in 1856 or 1857 indicates a definite and wide-spread organisation. This argument has no doubt some force. But unless the object of such circulation is definitely known, it has not much value in the present context. There is a practice in modern times which may be regarded as the nearest approximation to circulation of *chapatis*. Many of

us are familiar with a slip of paper containing a few lines which reaches an individual by post with a direction to make ten copies of it and send each to a friend. The addressee is threatened with dire consequences if he breaks the link by failing to comply with the directions. Instances are known where the same man has received such slips after an interval of fifteen to twenty years. This shows the force of superstition which keeps such a thing going. Something like this might have been the case with the *chapatis*. Whatever might have been the original design, the circulation might have been kept up through a vague sense of dread. In such a case no big organisation is necessary to keep things going. A few designing persons are sufficient for the purpose.

According to Mainuddin pieces of goat's flesh were also being distributed along with the *chapatis*. But not much is known of this, though it might throw some interesting light on the source or origin of the *chapatis*. For Hindus, over a large part of India, would not think of handling goat's flesh, and the idea could have emanated only from the Muslims.[81]

6. GENERAL CONCLUSION

We have passed in review the facts and circumstances generally cited in favour of the view that there was a general conspiracy behind the movement of 1857. We have seen that Bahadur Shah was incapable of organising such a conspiracy, and there is not an iota of evidence to prove that either Persia or Russia played any part in the great revolt of 1857. As regards Nana Sahib, the evidence in support of his organising such a conspiracy is weak in the extreme and its unreliable character is so manifest that no critical historian could possibly build up even any hypothesis to that effect. The utmost that can be said—and even this is highly problematic—is that he might have made an effort in this direction, but his attempts, if any, bore no fruit. The other so-called conspirators such as Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi or Kunwar Singh could not possibly have anything to do with such a

conspiracy. We do not know anything about either Maulavi Ahmadulla or the Nawab or Begam of Avadh which could lead us to believe that they had either the capacity or opportunity to organise a general conspiracy of an all-India character. Nor are there any grounds to suppose that the mutiny of the sepoys was the result of any such general conspiracy. It may be conceded,—though it is by no means a proved fact—that once the sepoys were excited by a mutinous spirit it was fanned and inflamed by interested individuals to serve their own purpose, so that what was in the first instance a mere desire to resist an infringement of their religion took, in certain cases or areas, a decidedly political character.

But while there is no positive evidence to support the theory of a general conspiracy, there are certain circumstances which render it highly improbable, if not altogether impossible. These have been admirably summed up in a minute by Sir John Lawrence from which we quote the following extract:

"If there was, indeed, a conspiracy in the country, and that conspiracy extended to the army, how can it be reasonably explained why none of those who adhered to our cause were acquainted with the circumstance? However small may be the number of our adherents when compared with those that took part against us, the actual number of the former is considerable. Many of these men remained true under all trials, others again died fighting on our side. None of these people can speak of a conspiracy in the first instance; none again of the conspirators, who expiated their guilt by the forfeit of their lives, ever made any such confession that I am aware of, though such confession would doubtless have saved their lives. None of the documents or papers which I have seen lead to such an impression."[82]

Referring to the alleged conspiracy with Persia Lawrence observes: "But had the Shah really intended to give the

ex-king any aid, had he even believed that a violent attempt would be made to subvert the power of England in India, is it reasonable to suppose that the Shah would have made peace and freed our troops locked up in that country? Again, had the Shah really been cognizant of such an attempt, would he not have sent his emissaries to Peshawar and into the Punjab? Had he done so, we would certainly have seen some marks of his intrigues. But such was not the case."

No unprejudiced mind can deny the force of these arguments, and fail to draw the obvious conclusion to which they lead. Thus both positive and negative evidences alike rule out the possibility that the great revolt of 1857 was the result of a general conspiracy.

FOOTNOTES

1. Mal, chapter II.
2. Ibid., 33.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid, 17.
5. Ibid, 18.
6. Ibid, 17.
7. Ibid, 18.
8. It is interesting to note in this connection the statement of Hutchinson, quoted above, on p. 319, that the arrest of the Maulavi produced no commotion among the people.
9. K, I. 578.
10. Ibid, 579 f.n.
11. P. 77.
11*a*. Savarkar, 77.
12. MS. L. Vol. No. 726, pp. 1109-1157.
12*a*. Baija Bai (Bhaiee) was the widow of Daulat Rao Sindhia.
13. MS. L. Also quoted in K, I. 645.
14. MS. L. p. 1117. Part of it is quoted in K, I. 579 f.n.
15. MS. L. pp. 1119 ff.
16. Ibid. p. 1127.
17. Ibid. p. 1129.
18. Quoted in K, I. 646.
19. K, I. 647.

20. K, I. 647-8.
21. *FS*, IV. 153.
22. *TB*, 263.
23. See above, pp. 245-47.
24. Extract F.
25. Extracts, D, E.
26. MS. L. Vol. No. 727, p. 847.
26*a*. Dr. S. N. Sen has arrived at the same conclusion after an elaborate discussion (Sen, pp. 162-171).
27. Holmes, 223-4.
28. Quoted by Holmes, p. 235, f.n.
29. The event, however, actually occurred on July 15.
29*a*. The story of Nana's tour is discredited by both Dr. S. N. Sen (*Eighteen Fifty-seven*, pp. 128-9) and Dr. P. C. Gupta (*Nana Sahib*, pp, 64-5). Sen points out that 'Nana could not proceed a mile from his palace without official leave'.
29*b*. See p. 247.
29*c*. See pp. 266-7.
30. K, II. 37
30*a*. *The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, II. 414.
31. *SAK*. 4.
32. *TB*, 149.
33. *TB*, 102,
34. *TB*, 121, 191 ff. Roberts—II, 426.
35. *TB*, 246 ff.
36. *TB*, 106 ff.
37. *TB*, 123.
38. *TB*, 180.
39. *TB*, 158,
40. *TB*, 189 ff.
41. *SAK*, 4.
42. *TB*. 123.
43. *TB*, 246 ff.
44. *TB*, 107.
45. *SAK*, 9.
46. *TB*, 149 ff.
46*a*. Pp. 229-30.
46*b*. Ibid.
47. Above, p. 239.
48. Above, pp. 243 ff.
49. *TB*, 253-4.
50. *TB*, 108.

51. *TB*, 257.

52. MS. L. Vol. 725, pp. 387 ff. Mohanlal adds that Bahadur Shah was not in communication with the mutineers at Mirat. He gradually found his position strong, being encouraged by false reports and delay of the English.

53. *AS*, I, 111.

54. This view was also held by Wilson, on other grounds, as will be stated later in this Chapter.

55. Cf. the beginning of the Mutiny at Aligarh (above, p. 84).

56. K, I. 653.

57. MS. D.

58. K, III. 35.

59. M, I. 27.

60. *RP*, 107. The writer is believed to be Malleson.

61. *India under Dalhousie and Canning*, p. 97. Sir H. S. Cunningham, in his biography of Earl Canning (Rulers of India series), observes: "No evidence, however, has ever been produced that the ex-King, either directly or indirectly, took part in the movement" (p. 51).

62. K, III. 41.

63. K, I. 573.

64. K, III. 36.

65. Mal, 18.

66. Ibid, 19.

67. Ibid, 33.

68. Ibid, 18.

68*a*. P. 344, Extract D.

69. K, I. 646.

70. TB. 255.

71. TB, 253.

72. Above, pp. 232 ff., 325 ff.

73. K, II. 109.

74. Holmes, 546.

75. K, II. 110; *AS*, 113.

75*a*. Alexander's letter to the Secretary to the NWP Government, dated 30 November, 1858, No. 331 of 1858.

76. K, II. 110.

77. *SAK*, 53.

78. K, I. 647. For the different views about the origin and object of the *chapatis*, cf. K, I. 632 ff. and P. C. Gupta, *Nana Sahib*, 33-8.

79. K, I. 638, f.n.

80. *CTM*, 9.

81. Ibid, 40.

82. *AS*, I. 111.

CHAPTER II

THE CHARACTER OF THE OUTBREAK OF 1857

1 DIVERGENT VIEWS

Divergent opinions have been expressed regarding the nature of the great outbreak of 1857. Volumes have been written on this subject, both by contemporary and later writers, and it is almost an impossible task to deal in detail with the different views and arguments advanced to support them.

These views may be broadly divided into two classes. Some think that the outbreak was really a rebellion of the people rather than merely a mutiny of the soldiers. Others hold that it was primarily and essentially a mutiny of sepoys, though in certain areas it drifted into a revolt of the people. Among contemporary writers, the first has been discussed at length by John Bruce Norton in a book entitled *Topics for Indian Statesmen*, and the second by Charles Raikes in his *Notes on the Revolt in North-Western Province of India*, both published in 1858.

That the second view had a large volume of support among Englishmen, immediately after the suppression of the Mutiny, will be evident from the following extract from an article in the *Edinburgh Review* (April, 1859): "Throughout its whole progress it has faithfully retained the character of a military revolt...Except in the newly annexed state of Oude it has not been taken up by the population. Now it is this circumstance which has saved India to Englishmen". The *Times* also expressed similar views[1]. On the other hand, a large number of English writers, such as Duff, Malleson, Kaye and Ball subscribed to the first view and represented the outbreak of 1857 as an organized campaign to drive away the British from India. It is, however, significant that all the contemporary Indian writers, some of whom occupied

very high position in public life, unanimously held the second view and looked upon the outbreak as essentially a military insurrection. Thus Kishorichand Mitra, an eminent Bengali, writing in 1858, says: "The insurrection is essentially a military insurrection. It is the revolt of a *lac* of sepoys... It has nothing of the popular element in it. The proportion of those who have joined the rebels sinks into nothingness when compared with those whose sympathies are enlisted with the Government. While the former may be counted by thousands, the latter may be counted by millions."[2] The same view was expressed by Sambhu Chandra Mukhopadhyaya[3], and Harish Chandra Mukherji[4], two eminent Bengali public men, and Sir Syed Ahmad[5], who himself played an important role in the outbreak, as mentioned above, and rose to high distinction as the leader of the Indian Musalmans in the nineteenth century. Reference has already been made to the writings of three contemporary Indians[6] who were eye-witnesses of the events in Delhi and Bareilly. We have also the writings of one Bengali[7], who was in Varanasi on pilgrimage, when the sepoys broke out into mutiny there, and also a few casual references in the autobiography of Rajnarain Basu, who is regarded as the father of nationalism in Bengal and was a very highly respected person. None of them felt any sympathy for the mutinous sepoys or the cause they represented, and looked upon them as evil-doers rather than fighters for freedom. No reference is made by any of them to any popular support behind the Mutiny. Godse Bhatji, a Marathi who travelled over North India during the outbreak, also expressed similar view[8].

Both the British Indian Association and the Muhammadan Association of Calcutta passed resolutions on the outbreak of the Mutiny, denouncing it and trusting that it would meet with 'no sympathy, countenance or support from the bulk of the civil population[9].' As mentioned above, even Bahadur Shah, Nana and the Rani of Jhansi denounced the sepoys.

In contrast with the contemporary Indians, their descendants of the present day look upon the outbreak of 1857 as a general revolt of the people, and what is more curious, accuse the Englishmen of deliberately misrepresenting the great popular rebellion as a mutiny. It will be quite clear from what has been said above, that there is not the least truth in this accusation. The divergence of views did not follow any racial line, at least at the beginning, save that, so far as available evidence goes, it was the Indians, and not the Englishmen of the time, who unanimously represented or misrepresented the outbreak as essentially a mutiny. That this was the general view of even eminent Indian statesmen down to the end of the nineteenth century is proved by the statement recorded by Dadabhai Naoroji that "the people in India not only had no share in it (the Mutiny), but were actually ready at the call of the authorities to rise and support them[10]."

Today the Indians, generally speaking, subscribe to the views of Norton and his followers. Indeed, since the beginning of the present century, the pendulum has swung to the opposite extreme, and most Indians not only look upon the outbreak of 1857 as a great revolt of the people, but go even further and claim it to be the first 'Indian War of Independence.' This view has been made popular by the publication of a book with the above title by Sri V. D. Savarkar, an eminent Indian patriot, who played a very prominent part in India's struggle for freedom in the present century, and suffered much for his activities in the hands of the British authorities. A general revolt or a 'war of independence necessarily implies or presupposes a definite plan and organization. This is admitted in the latest edition of Savarkar's book where it is stated, about the outbreak of 1857, that the "national minded leaders and thinkers have regarded it as a planned and organised political and military rising aimed at destroying the British power in India."[11] Further, such an organization implies a pre-concerted conspiracy or

plot to drive out the British. But, as shown in the preceding chapter, there is no evidence for the existence of any such conspiracy.

It is unnecessary to disscuss all the different views so far held on the subject, as most of them cover more or less the same grounds. It will suffice to state the views of a representative of each of the two classes mentioned above. For obvious reasons, I have selected only contemporary persons who had every opportunity of knowing the truth, and an Indian for the first view and an Englishman for the second.

In a letter written to Kaye, dated 14th December, 1864, Syed Ahmad, the veteran Muslim statesman, who personally played an important role in the Mutiny at Bijnor, observes as follows:

"There was no popular outbreak. Even the soldiers would not have mutinied but for Meerut punishments.

"The rebellion in the N. W. P. assumed three forms:—

1st. Robbers and dacoits......not only attacked wayfarers but also plundered villages and towns.

2nd. Some of the minor chiefs whose families have fallen into decay endeavoured the resuscitation of their ancestral power. This sort of mutiny occurred in four places only, Cawnpore, Bareilly, Bijnor, and Farrukhabad. Some of these parties tried to have themselves restored while others were compelled by the mutineers to make an effort.

3rd. Some of the lower classes, variously employed, entered the service of such rebellious chiefs.

"As far as I know the population of no part of the N. W. P. tried or even thought of rendering any assistance to the native rebellious chiefs much less that of subverting British rule. A great proof of the justice of this assertion lies in the fact that as soon as the mutinous troops and the rebellious chiefs were expelled from a district peace was immediately restored. I, therefore, think that the mutiny of 1857 was not a popular rebellion."[12]

John Bruce Norton wrote a big book entitled *"Topics for Indian Statesmen."* In chapter II of this book the author discusses the causes and the character of the Sepoy Mutiny. He is of opinion that the outbreak was more a rebellion of the people than merely a mutiny of the soldiers. His main arguments are as follows:—

(1) The trial of the King of Delhi disclosed the existence of a conspiracy long previous to the first outbreak of the rebellion. He was in communication with the numerous chiefs in India and actually sent emissaries to the Shah of Persia during the late Persian War to obtain his aid towards the extirpation of the English. The Delhi proclamations were also sent to Oudh and the boy King of Lucknow "affected to act as the appointee of the great Moghul at Delhi."

(2) When the soldiers from Mirat entered Delhi, local infantry at once "opened out so as to expose their officers to the fire of the cavalry, who rode up and pistolled them one by one." The whole then proceeded to the palace, attacked the arsenal, murdered the Europeans, and seized the city. "The whole work was too systematically done to permit of the supposition that it was the result of momentary impulse."

(3) Previous to the outbreak a number of Faquirs or mendicants had been wandering over the country and some of them were detected in tampering with the Sepoys of the armies of Madras and Bombay.

(4) Wide distribution of *chapatis*.

(5) The cry of greased cartridges did not originate with the sepoys, but was selected with consummate tact and skill by those who, behind the curtain, were casting about for a motive which should deeply stir both Muslim and Hindu ranks of the Bengal army. The cartridge cry was the spark which fired the train; but the train had been most carefully laid.

(6) The evidence of eye-witnesses shows that at least in 'Oudh the whole population was up in arms; every village

was fortified, and every man's hand was against us.' 'As an example it may be pointed out that out of the 40,000 men who besieged Lucknow 20,000 went way to sow their fields.' The whole course of the siege of Lucknow unmistakably proves that "so far as Oudh at least is concerned, we have to deal with a thoroughly *National* Rebellion."

(7) It will be interesting to find out how many places were involved in insurrection where no sepoy regiments were present.

(8) There are innumerable accounts of fight with matchlockmen and spear or bowmen and burning of entire villages. 'In all such cases, we may rest assured, that our opponents were not mutineers, who were armed with percussion musket and had no village to burn.'

(9) "It is true that some villagers proved friendly to the English refugees, but the general run of the story is a reverse of this. The fugitives are plundered and ill-treated; they have to hide in jungles and keep away from the high-roads; they dare not approach the villages, even for water." There were evidently two factors in almost all the localities, one friendly, and another hostile to the English.

(10) We should also remember the number of petty chiefs with their followers whom the British forces everywhere encountered.

(11) If it were simply a military mutiny, how is it that nowhere the civil officers of Government had been able to organise the people for resistance, even after the tide of fortune had turned in our favour and when the natives were encouraged by the presence of our troops?

(12) *The Friend of India*, dated 2nd July, 1857, refers to the state of utter disorganisation in the Upper provinces; the dispossessed Zamindars, in nearly all the villages, have ousted their successors, and scores of petty Rajas have proclaimed their independence; public roads were overrun by thieves and robbers. In general it may be said that nearly half of the

states changed hands and the people did not show any opposition to the old proprietors.

(13) 'The wholesale massacre of villagers and the burning of villages by the English in Oudh (Parliamentary Paper, No. 145, dated 11th December, 1857) and virulent intestine war in North-West and Central India.'

(14) A gentleman writes from Tirhut that "there is a strong sympathy with the mutineers throughout the country, every success or fresh rising of the mutineers was marked here with a look of satisfaction."

(15) On page 18 is given a long list of chiefs who rebelled against the British in different parts of India (special mention is made of the chief of Jaloun who raised a body of 12,000; Rover Singh of Shahabad had rebel followers estimated from 20,000 to 40,000; the Chief of Secundra Rao, with a body of cavalry and infantry, has taken possession of Coel and Aligarh and proclaimed himself Subadar or Governor, for the King of Delhi, of all the country between Agra and Allahabad).

(16) In pages 20 and 21 are given quotations from contemporary writers about the discontent and disaffection, even of hatred, of the natives towards the English, in all parts of the North-West and Central India.

(17) According to Dr. Duff, "it was not a military revolt but a rebellion or revolution which alone can account for the little progress hitherto made in extinguishing it." It started as a military mutiny, but from the very outset, in Northern and Central India, it has been gradually assuming more and more the character of a rebellion on the part of vast multitudes beyond the sepoy army against British supremacy and sovereignty. In pp. 25 ff. is given the account of a Hindu about the oppression committed by the rebels on innocent Indian pilgrims near about Allahabad.

(18) According to an American, "This formidable rebellion is a natural consequence of the annexation of Oudh

by the British." 'The present rebellion in Oudh is eminently a National rebellion. The sepoys, the budmashes, the ryots, the Zamindars are all in arms for their national grievances. Even the massacre at Kanpur may be considered as a retaliation for gross indignities thrust upon the ladies of the royal family of Oudh by the British Commissioner a little more than a year ago.'

(19) The Supreme Government issued a "Narrative of Events" on September 12, 1857, which contains the following: "In consequence of the *general nature of the rebellion* and the impossibility of identifying the majority of the rebels the Magistrate recommended the wholesale burning and destruction of *all villages* proved to have sent men to take *active part* in the rebellion."

It is no doubt a formidable array of facts and arguments, but the discussion in the preceding chapter shows what little importance attaches to some of these arguments, specially Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. As regards the other points, while the facts are more or less accurately stated they do not necessarily lead to the conclusion reached, as will be shown in course of the discussion that follows.

This class of writers naturally give prominence to a pre-arranged wide-spread conspiracy, which seems to form the basis of their view that the outbreak was an organised national revolt. This question has been thoroughly discussed in the preceding chapter. As we have shown, there is absolutely no foundation for the view that the movement was the result of a general conspiracy.

But while there was no general conspiracy by outside leaders which led to the mutiny of the sepoys, there is evidence to show that there was some sort of understanding, if not a regular conspiracy, among the sepoys stationed in different areas. The sepoys, as a class, had a number of grievances and it is not difficult to understand that they would make a common cause against the authorities. It is likely

that some secret negotiations were going on between the leading sepoys of different cantonments, though the exact nature of this cannot be ascertained. It is probable that the object of these negotiations was to organise a general mutiny, but for this we have got no definite evidence. All that we can say is that great excitement prevailed among the sepoys, and large bodies of them were animated by a common feeling of animosity against the British. But though there might have been understanding and negotiations between the different bodies of troops, the plot was confined to them, or rather to some leading figures in each group, and no connection has been established between the mutinous sepoys and the ruling chiefs, or other prominent leaders mentioned above.

The most reasonable conclusion, therefore, seems to be that primarily the outbreak was a mutiny of the troops, and whatever plan or conspiracy might have been at the bottom of it, it was at first practically confined to the troops. They might have been excited by outside agencies like Maulavi Ahmadulla or some other persons, but the actual plot was hatched by the sepoys themselves.

II. REVOLT OF THE CIVIL POPULATION—ITS EXTENT AND CHARACTER

In order to judge of the real nature of the great outbreak of 1857, it is necessary to form an accurate idea of the rebellious movement both among the sepoys and the civil population. As regards the revolt of civil population it is possible to take a dispassionate view of its true nature only if one dismisses the idea of a general conspiracy or even of a concerted action on the part of its so-called leaders like Bahadur Shah, Nana Sahib, Rani of Jhansi, Kunwar Singh and others. Enough has been said above, in Book II Chapter III, to indicate its general characteristics, which may be summed up as follows:. First, the civil population in each locality revolted only when the British authority had left it

and the administrative machinery had completely broken down. The people came to believe that the British Raj was at an end and merely took advantage of the political vacuum thus created to serve their own material interests. Secondly, there was no co-ordination between the different groups of rebels or their leaders except in the very last phase when they were pushed to the corner by the advancing British army. Thirdly, each group or individual leader fought for self-interest and had no allegiance to a common cause. This is strikingly illustrated by the assumption of supreme authority, by Bahadur Shah, as Emperer of Hindusthan, and Nana Sahib as the Peshwa. Sundry other chiefs declared themselves rulers in their own localities, and though some of them paid nominal allegiance either to Bahadur Shah or to Nana, they all exercised their authority as independent sovereigns. Fourthly, from the very beginning the goonda elements of the population and particularly the marauding tribes like Gujars, Ranghars etc. took a prominent part in the local risings. Even the ordinary people were animated more by subversive than constructive activities. The result was that plunder, rapine, massacre and incendiarism, on a large scale, directed agains the Europeans as well as Indians, mostly characterized these outbreaks. In addition to these, personal vendetta, a desire to gain by force what was lost by legal process, settling old scores, and satisfying personal grudge played a large part in the popular upsurge almost wherever it occurred.

It would appear from the detailed account given in Book II, that the mutiny was most widely spread in the area now covered by the State of Uttar Pradesh, and fringes of neighbouring territories in all directions save the north, and there the civil population was also largely affected. The state of things outside the area requires a detailed consideration. There was mutiny in the Panjab, but it was only in the East Panjab that it was for a time turned into a mass movement, mainly due to the predatory habits of large elements of population. But order was soon restored with the aid of the loyal

chiefs of Patiala, Nabha, and Jhind, and the Sikhs and other loyal elements of the population. In Bengal and East Behar, some sepoys mutinied at Dacca, Chittagong, Tipperah, and Bhagalpur, but were dispersed without difficulty. The civil population was unaffected, though there was an outbreak among the Santals, who had also revolted only two years before.

In the area lying to the south of the Yamuna, Ajmer was quiet but there were isolated mutinies at Nasirabad and Neemuch, the two chief military stations under British occupation. The sepoys of these places set out for Delhi, plundering villages and burning houses on their way. Order was, however, soon restored, chiefly with the help of the troops of Jodhpur.

There were risings at Indore, Mandasor, and Dhar, but these were easily put down and it is said that "the country population turned on the beaten rebels and destroyed many of them." Rajasthan was quiet, though minor risings took place here and there.

The mutiny at Jhansi was followed by that at Nowgong. Soon there was insurrection of local chiefs in some parts of Bundelkhand. There were risings in Sagar and Nerbudda territories. On June 12, the sepoys mutinied at Lalitpur. Powerful chiefs like the Nawab of Banda, and Raja of Banpur rebelled, but many remained quite faithful to the British, and some of these, like the ruler of Orchha, helped the British and even fought against those that rebelled. Mutinies broke out at Sagar and Jubbulpore and shortly the disturbances became general. There were plunderings on a large scale. Minor chiefs (Thakurs) plundered villages, and village communities preyed upon each other. Villages refused to pay revenues to the Government.

There were attempts at mutiny both at Nagpur and Hyderabad, the capital of the Nizam, but prompt action on the part of the authorities prevented actual outbreak.

It would appear from what has been said above that the great outbreak of 1857 assumed different aspects in different areas. In some places it was purely a mutiny of the sepoys, joined at a later stage by some discontented elements as well as the riff-raff and other disturbing elements of society who are always eager to take advantage of anarchy and confusion to serve their own ends. In other areas the Mutiny was succeeded by a general revolt in which, in addition to the above elements, other classes of people, particularly dispossessed chiefs, ejected landlords and tenants, and other persons nourishing personal grievances joined in the fray in the hope of regaining their power and possessions. In addition to these two we may note a third area in which we can trace a sullen discontent against the British and passive, even active, sympathy with the mutineers among the civil population or certain sections of it, but no overt acts of rebellion by them.

If we now proceed to make a geographical distribution of those three areas we have to include the Panjab and a large part of Madhya Pradesh under the first zone; the greater part of U. P., a small part of Madhya Pradesh and the western part of Bihar under the second zone; and nearly the whole of Rajasthan and Maharashtra under the third zone. In spite of petty local risings here and there, the whole of Bengal, Assam, Eastern Bihar, Orissa, Eastern Deccan and South India practically remained unaffected by the great outbreak.

As regards the second zone, where alone the revolt seemed to be of a popular or national character, there were particular local reasons for it, at least in respect of Avadh, which was so arbitrarily annexed only a year before the Mutiny broke out. As we shall see later, many have regarded this act on the part of Dalhousie as one of the chief and immediate causes of the Mutiny. Even the British authorities in England had to admit the special reasons for violent outbreak in Avadh, as is shown by the following extract from a letter written by the

Secret Committee of the Court of Directors to the Governor-General on 19 April, 1858.

"War in Oudh has derived much of its popular character from the sudden dethronement of the Crown and the summary settlement of the revenue which deprived a large number of landlords of their lands.

Under the circumstances, hostilities which have been carried on in Oude have rather the character of legitimate war than that of rebellion".[13]

As noted obove[14], a regular government was set up at Lakhnau under the son of the ex-King Wajid Ali, but the real powers behind the throne were the Begam and Ahmadulla.

If we turn to the other prominent leaders associated with the movement, namely Bahadur Shah, Nana Sahib, the Rani of Jhansi, and Kunwar Singh, it immediately strikes us that all these four were smarting under grievous injury done to them by the British and, therefore, bore special grudge against them. It may be argued that although they were actuated primarily by self-interest they might at the same time have been inspired by the idea of patriotism. This may be so, for all we know, but we have no evidence in support of it. It is an undeniable fact that all the leading figures in this great outbreak were alienated from the British for private reasons. It may be a pure accident, but the fact remains.

It is often urged that they were the natural leaders under whom the Indians fought the War of Independence. It is not easy to understand in what sense these four persons could be regarded as natural leaders. The first was a dotard and a puppet on the throne of the Mughals, who inherited nothing but their name, and had little power and less knowledge of men and things. The second was an adopted child of a worthless wicked ex-Peshwa who was mainly instrumental in ruining the Maratha power. These have certainly no better claim to be regarded as natural leaders than the hundreds of

ruling chiefs in India, and in particular the more eminent among them such as the Sindhia, the Holkar, the Nizam and the various Rajput chiefs. Neither the Rani of Jhansi nor Kunwar Singh, in spite of their personal ability, has any right to be called a natural leader of the country. The first was the young widow of an almost unknown ruler of a petty State, then defunct, and the second was a small Talukdar in the interior of Bihar, utterly impoverished beyond hopes of recovery. Even their names were probably unknown before 1857 to persons beyond a hundred miles of their native places.

We have referred more than once to the different classes of people who joined the revolt against the British. We may now mention some of the prominent classes or groups who kept aloof from it. Among these elements the most prominent were the great ruling chiefs of India such as Sindhia, Holkar, Gaekwar, the Nizam and the historic ruling houses of Rajasthan, Mysore and Travancore. The Sikh chiefs, such as those of Jhind and Patiala, actively helped the British. Some minor chiefs joined the rebellion, but their proportion to the rest who did not, would not probably exceed one per cent.

The English educated classes as a rule not only did not join the movement, but were treated as enemies by the sepoys. This is known from the statements made by two eminent Bengalis as noted above. This view is also supported by a contemporary English officer, Mr. Raikes, who says;

"During the course of the mutiny, numerous English scholars who had offices under our Government came in to us at Agra, from Oudh, Rohilkhand, and the Doab. All evinced a spirit of determined loyalty to their British employers, and many suffered death merely as English scholars, at the hands of the mutineers. A Bengalee Baboo at Furuckabad or Cawnpore was almost in as great peril as a Christian, so long as those cities were in the hands of the rebels. Not that the Baboo had personally any taste for the honours of

martyrdom; for to tell the truth, he was the veriest coward under the sun, but simply because the Sepoy instinctively hated the English scholars, as part and parcel of the English community. But the students of Agra, Furuckabad, Banaras, Delhi or Bareilly, who had been instructed either at the Government or Mission colleges, behaved in a much bolder manner, and often at the risk of their own lives openly declared their adherence to the British cause."[15]

Even among the sepoys of the affected areas a certain number remained loyal till the last. Outside the Bengal army native soldiers as a rule remained loyal, or at least did not break out into open mutiny. Their number would be considerable, probably not less than the mutinous sepoys. The Sikhs and the Gurkhas not only remained loyal to the British, but actively helped them in recapturing, respectively, Delhi and Lakhnau.

As regards the civil population, there is no doubt that quite a large element was friendly to the British to start with, and the reasons for which they later turned against them have been described above. It cannot be held by any stretch of imagination that their love for their country was one of the elements that determined their later course of action. Even in U. P. a considerable section of the people was sympathetic, or at least not openly hostile, to the English. Outside the boundaries of U. P., probably by far the largest number of civil population was friendly to the British, and in any case did not show any hostile feelings against them. It is difficult in view of all these considerations to regard even the revolt in U. P. and Western Bihar as either national, or general, in the true sense of the term. As regards the rest of India the question need not be seriously discussed, as the civil population was, broadly speaking, either neutral or friendly.

In this connection reference may be made to the following observations of Russell, the correspondent of the *Times* of London, who was present in India during the Mutiny.

"Yet it must be admitted that with all their courage they (the British) would have been quite exterminated if the natives had been all and altogether hostile to them. The desperate defences made by the garrisons were no doubt heroic; but the natives shared their glory, and they by their aid and presence rendered the defence possible. Our siege of Delhi would have been impossible if the Raja of Patiala and Jhind had not been our friend and if the Sikhs had not recruited in our battalions and remained quiet in the Punjab. The Sikhs of Lucknow did good service and in all cases our garrisons were helped, fed, and served by the natives as our armies were attended and strengthened by them in the field. Look at us all, here in camp, at this moment! Our outposts are native troops, natives are cutting grass for our horses and grooming them, feeding the elephants, managing the transport, supplying the commissariat which feeds us, cooking our soldiers' food, clearing their camp, pitching and carrying their tents, waiting on our officers, and lending us their money. The soldier who acts as my amanuensis declares that his regiment would not have lived a week but for the regimental servants, Dak bearers, hospital men and other dependants. Gurkha guides did good service at Delhi and the Bengal artillery men were as much exposed as the Europeans."[16]

III. COMMUNAL RELATIONS

Those who look upon the outbreak of 1857 as a national revolt advance as a strong argument in support of their view that it was a joint endeavour of the two great communities, *viz.* Hindus and Mussulmans. But though the sepoys and the common people of both the communities fought together against the English, we miss that real communal amity which characterises a national effort. It is a significant fact that the contemporary Englishmen generally viewed upon the outbreak mainly as a handiwork of the Muslims. Reference may be made to a few opinions out of many. Thus Raikes says: "They (the Muslims) have behaved in the part of India where

I had jurisdiction, very ill; so ill indeed that if the rest of the population had sympathised with them, instead of antagonised, I should despair of governing India for the future." He then adds the following in support of his view.

"I cannot give a fairer instance of the difference between the conduct of the Hindoo and Mahomedan people at the time of the mutiny than was afforded in our own court at Agra. We had numerous Mahomedans and Hindoos, with a sprinkling of Christians, at the bar. With one exception, all the Mahomedan pleaders left the court; one of them, Sufdur Ali by name, was hanged by order of Mr. Harington, for plundering the property of an English Officer. The rest gave no assistance whatever to us. The Hindoos, on the contrary, exerted themselves to protect and secure the property of their English judges, preserved our horses and moveable property, and did whatever else they could to show their loyalty and affection. The Mahomedans either deserted us or joined the rebels. And so it was all over the North-Western Provinces, a Mahomedan was another word for a rebel".[17]

Raikes is supported by other contemporary Englishmen. Roberts (later Field-Marshal) wrote that he would "show these rascally Musalmans that, with God's help, Englishmen will still be masters of India."[18] Mrs. Coopland writes: "As this is completely a Mahomedan rising, there is not much to be feared from the Hindoos of Benares."[19] Captain P. G. Scot remarks in his Report on the mutiny at Jhansi: "At Nowgong and Jhansi they let the infantry begin the mutiny. I believe the reason was solely that they wished to conceal the character of the movement, *viz.* its being a Mahomedan one. They were the most blood-thirsty, when the mutiny did break out."[20]

A military officer, who took part in the siege of Delhi, writes; "The Mahomedans were generally hostile to us, the Hindoos much less." This feeling persisted in the official circle even long after the fall of Delhi. Referring to the city of

Delhi, the same writer observes: "It was not till the end of November, that the Hindu portion of the population was allowed to return. No Mahomedans could get in at the gate without a special order, and a mark was set upon their houses and they were required to prove their loyalty before getting back again."[21]

Not only the Europeans, but even the Muslims themselves, at least a section of them, believed that they were the senior partners in the great undertaking. Sir Syed Ahmad indirectly admitted this fact when he said: "The Muslims were in every respect more dissatisfied than the Hindus, and hence in most districts they were comparatively more rebellious, though the latter were not wanting in this respect."[22] This is also quite clear from the many Proclamations issued by the Muslim chiefs who had assumed independent authority in various localities. Reference may be made to the two Proclamations issued by Khan Bahadur Khan of Bareilly whose activities have been described above. Throughout his Proclamations runs the assumption that while the Muslims are exerting themselves to the utmost, the Hindus are lukewarm in their efforts. Accordingly a bait was offered to the Hindus. "If the Hindoos", so runs the Proclamation, "shall exert themselves in the murder of these infidels and expel them from the country, they shall be rewarded for their patriotism by the extinction of the practice of the slaughter of the kine." But it was made abundantly clear that "the entire prohibition of this practice is made conditional upon the complete extermination of the infidels from India. If any Hindoo shall shrink from joining in this cause, the evils of revival of this practice shall recoil upon them."[23]

It is also a very significant fact that all the Proclamations of the Muslim chiefs in Avadh and Rohilkhand contain an appeal to the Muslims in the name of their religion, and remind them on their faith in the Quran, that by fighting

against the infidels, or paying money to others to fight, they would secure to themselves eternal beatitude. To the Hindus also the appeal was made in the name of their religion by pointing out how the British Government defiled it by introducing the remarriage of widows, the abolition of *Suttee* etc. To the native rulers also, after referring to the annexation of States, appeal was made in the name of religion. "Their designs for destroying your religion, O Rajas, is manifest...... Be it known to all of you, that if these English are permitted to remain in India, they will butcher you all and put an end to your religion."[24]

It is quite obvious that the idea of a common national endeavour to free the country from the yoke of the British is conspicuous by its absence in these Proclamations. Indeed we could hardly expect such an idea in those days from people of this class, though in our national enthusiasm in later days we attributed it to them.

It is equally obvious that the great difference between the Hindus and the Muslims loomed large even in the territories where the revolt of the civil population was most widely spread. An attempt was made to minimise the evil by emphasizing the paramount need of unity between the two communities. A Proclamation was issued at Delhi with the royal permission, urging upon the two communities to unite in the struggle. But it also stressed the religion as the guiding force of the movement. In view of its importance it may be quoted in full.

"To all Hindoos and Mussulmans, citizens and servants of Hindostan, the Officers of the Army now at Delhi and Meerut send greeting:—

"It is well known that in these days all the English have entertained these evil designs—first, to destroy the religion of the whole Hindustani Army, and then to make the people by compulsion Christians. Therefore we, solely on account of our religion, have combined with the people, and have not

spared alive one infidel, and have re-established the Delhi dynasty on these terms. Hundreds of guns and a large amount of treasure have fallen into our hands; therefore, it is fitting that whoever of the soldiers and people dislike turning Christians should unite with one heart, and, acting courageously, not leave the seed of these infidels remaining.

"It is further necessary that all Hindoos and Mussulmans unite in this struggle, and, following the instructions of some respectable people, keep themselves secure, so that good order may be maintained, the poorer classes kept contented, and they themselves be exalted to rank and dignity."

But the communal spirit was too deeply rooted to be wiped out by mere pious wishes embodied in Proclamations, even of the King himself. It raised its ugly head in the city of Delhi itself even when its siege by the British was imminent, and the fate of the whole struggle depended upon its successful defence by the combined efforts of all communities. Thus we read in Jiwanlal's Diary, under the date, May 19: "This day the standard of the Holy War was raised by the Mahommedans in the Jumma Masjid. The people of Dharampur and the low characters of the city were concerned in this act. The King was angry and remonstrated, because such a display of fanaticism would only tend to exasperate the Hindus."

On May 20, he writes: "Moulvie Mahommed Said demanded an audience, and represented to the King that the standard of Holy War had been erected for the purpose of inflaming the minds of the Mahommedans against the Hindus. The King answered that such a jehad was quite impossible, and such an idea an act of extreme folly, for the majority of the Purbeah soldiers were Hindus. Moreover, such an act would create internecine war, and the result would be deplorable. It was fitting that sympathy should exist among all classes. It was pointed out that the Hindus were leaning towards an alliance with the English and had no sympathy

with the Mahommedans, and were already holding themselves apart. A deputation of Hindu officers arrived to complain of the war against Hindus being preached. The King replied: "The Holy War is against the English; I have forbidden it against the Hindus."

"...At three o'clock Hakim Ahsanullah Khan represented that the soldiers were looting in the city, and requested that they should be expelled. To get rid of them, orders were this day issued to Mirza Mogul to proceed with a strong force towards Meerut to attack any English force assembled there."[25]

The account of Jiwanlal is confirmed by the following extract of a letter written by Major General T. Reed from his camp at Delhi to Lawrence, the Chief Commissioner of the Panjab: "They are displaying the green flag in the city and bullying the Hindus who are praying for our Government—so says our secret intelligence." This letter is dated June 14, 1857.[26] Chunilal also refers to the incident in his written statement during the trial of Bahadur Shah.

But the communal spirit was not confined to Delhi. We learn from official report that on the night of the mutiny (June, 4) at Varanasi "news was received that some Mussulmans had determined to raise the Green Flag in the temple of Bishessur...Mr. Lind called on the Rajputs in the city to prevent the insult to their faith. So the Musulmans retired peacefully."[27]

The communal hatred led to ugly communal riots in many parts of U. P. Green Flag was hoisted and bloody wars were fought between the Hindus and Muslims in Bareilly, Bijnor, Moradabad and other places where the Muslims shouted for the revival of the Muslim kingdom.

Such communal ideas persisted even long after the Mutiny. Blunt, an eminent Englishman, who visited India during the Viceroyalty of Lord Ripon, was told by an old Muslim Grandee, the Chief of Loharo, more than twenty years later, that

"what he did not like about the Mutiny was that most of them were Hindus."[28] Such communal feelings were not, of course, universal, but it is clearly proved by the Proclamations and Hindu-Muslim riots that they largely prevailed in U. P., the only province in which the outbreak developed into a general revolt. Even the mass revolt in U. P. can, therefore, be scarcely regarded as a truly national one.

The communal feeling was not the only obstacle to the solidarity of a national spirit. There was racial animosity produced by historical causes. It was most clearly manifested in the suspicion and jealousy, if not positive hatred, between the Muslims on the one hand and the Marathas and the Sikhs on the other. The British statesmen in India were fully cognisant of this and exploited it to their advantage. As a concrete instance reference may be made to the situation in Hyderabad in 1857, where anti-British feeling was roused by the events in Northern India, and the elements of insurrection were as rife as in many other parts where it actually broke out. Analysing the current feelings of the Muslims in Hyderabad at that time, Col. Davidson, the Resident of Hyderabad writes:—

"The insurrectionary movements in the Mahratta States of Holkar and Scindia, except as a general means of excitement to subvert our power, were never regarded with any favour at Hyderabad; indeed, a general Mahratta movement, having a probability of success, would have at once enlisted on our side the old hereditary and ever cherished 'Moglaee' animosity against their former and national foe, the Mahrattas, and there is no doubt the Nizam and his own immediate army would have been easily induced to take the field in our favour on such an event and in such a cause.

"Gwalior fell, and was retaken without a sign, except a few passing remarks at Hyderabad, and although a rising in favour of Tantia Topee was latterly planned by emissaries sent by the Nana, it, as far as it went, was only joined by some

of the most impoverished and desperate characters of the Durbar, while the Deccan Mahommedans of the contingent were perfectly willing, as of old, to be led against Scindia and Holkar, which they believed was the case when they first took the field to join the Bombay troops in Malwa.

"While this was the feeling towards the Mahrattas, it was very different in regard to the Mahommedan cause. Every eye was turned towards Delhi and Lucknow, and news of every kind was eagerly sought and paid for. Disastrous rumours of the wildest kind, hostile to the British Government, were prevalent and always acceptable to the fanatical and warlike classes of the population; letters of the most treasonable and seditious character were intercepted from Aurangabad, Bhupal, Ahmedabad, Belgaum, Kurnool and Mysore; and there cannot be a doubt that, had a popular leader arisen, Hyderabad would have been speedily in a state of insurrection as it had already been of sedition, but fortunately no one of rank, wealth, and position could rise after the unsuccessful attack on the Residency in July 1857, which was the culminating point of our troubles in Hyderabad, and also as it was plain to all that the British Government were determined to fight the battle to the last and at all hazards, wherever insurrection showed itself."[29]

This racial feeling was certainly shared by the Sikhs. The proclamation of Bahadur Shah as Emperor alienated them as they naturally interpreted it as the restoration of the rule of the Muslims from whom they had suffered so much in the past. It is on record that high British officials in the Panjab successfully persuaded the Sikhs to cast in their lot with them by describing in vivid language the injuries and insults they had suffered in the past in the hands of the Mughal Emperors. Having impressed this point on their mind they held out before them the grand opportunity they now had of taking full vengeance. There can be hardly any doubt that the Sikhs were largely influenced by such considerations in

wholeheartedly offering their services to the British Government.

There are good grounds to believe that the same spirit alienated the Rajputs and the Marathas, as they, too, for historical reasons, did not favour the restoration of the Muslim rule. This view is supported by the conduct of Nana Sahib, first in inducing the sepoys not to proceed to Delhi, and then in proclaiming himself as the Peshwa. It is also to be noted that none of the Rajput and Maratha chiefs responded to the invitation of Bahadur Shah, and all the propaganda in Maharashtra was carried on in the name of Nana.

These considerations, as well as the fact that by far the greater part of India was free from any overt acts of hostility against the British Government, divest the outbreak of 1857 of a national character, properly so called.

IV. WAS THE OUTBREAK OF 1857 A NATIONAL WAR OF INDEPENDENCE ?

We may now proceed to discuss whether it can be regarded as a national war of independence. In properly judging this question we have to take into consideration the character of the outbreak as discussed above, as well as the motives of the different persons and classes who took part in it. As we have seen above, the most important elements who fought against the British were the sepoys. They had their own grievances, similar to those which led to local mutinies on many previous occasions. The utmost that can be said is that they were also inspired by the motive of defending their religion against the intrigues of Christians to pollute them, but not that of regaining the freedom of their country. Even this charitable interpretation is, however, not admitted by all. We have quoted above the opinion of Ahsanulla that the sepoys were inspired more by a desire of material gain than any political or even religious consideration. Such a view is amply supported by the conduct of the sepoys at Delhi and in other places. Far

from enlisting the sympathy and support of the people at large, they were intent on plundering them and burning their villages. It is a painful but undeniable fact that both Europeans and Indians were alike victims to their fury and greed, and in many places they inspired a sense of dread and terror rather than that of sympathy and fellow-feeling among the people. The sepoys at Delhi refused to fight unless they were paid their salaries, and that on an adequate scale,—a demand which is hardly in consonance with the spirit which should guide a fighter in a war of independence. Many sepoys at Delhi, Bareilly, and Allahabad, and probably in other places, too, after plundering indiscriminately, went back to their homes to enjoy the wealth they had secured, without any thought of any other question or policy. There is nothing in the conduct or behaviour of the sepoys which would justify us in the belief, or even assumption, that they were inspired by love for their country and fought against the British with the definite idea of freeing their motherland.

In this connection a very important fact is often forgotten by those who claim the outbreak of 1857 as a national war of independence, for which patriotic sepoys shed their blood, and political leaders had been preparing grounds for a long time. The Panjab was conquered by the British with the help of the sepoys less than ten years before the outbreak of Mutiny. The battle of Chillianwala, which proved the valour and heroism of the Sikhs and their ability, under more favourable circumstances, to defeat the English, was fought in 1849, only eight years before the Mutiny. If there were really a movement for freeing India from the British yoke, obviously this was the most suitable opportunity. But we have not the least evidence to show that the Indian leaders like Nana Sahib and others mentioned above raised even their little finger to help the Sikhs. The sepoys themselves, who are supposed to have sacrificed their all for the sake of their country in 1857, had not the least scruple to fight the Sikhs who were the last defender of liberty in India. There

are even allegations that the Sikhs entreated the sepoys to refuse help to the British, but in vain. Although this cannot be definitely proved, it should have occurred to every sepoy, if he had real love for his country, that by defeating the Sikhs he would only forge the last link in the chain by which India was being fettered by the British. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that the attitude and activities of the sepoys in 1849 certainly did not correspond to the patriotic fervour with which they are supposed to be endowed in 1857. Unless, therefore, we suppose that this sentiment was suddenly developed during the short interval of eight years, we can hardly regard the sepoys, who rebelled in 1857, as being inspired by the idea of regaining freedom of India. Incidentally, the Sikh War also proves the absence, in 1849, of any serious conspiracy or organisation against the British, although, according to Sitaram Bawa, such conspiracy against the British was going on for many years in almost every native court. Surely the Sikh War would have been the most suitable opportunity, if ever there were any, which the conspirators should have taken advantage of for organising a war of independence against the British.

As mentioned above, the Sikhs, along with the Gurkhas, faithfully served the British during the outbreak of 1857, and were mainly instrumental in defeating the sepoys. It is usual to blame the Sikhs for this unpatriotic act, but they could hardly be expected to pay the sepoys back other than in their own coins. The same argument also applies to the Gurkhas whose country was invaded and who were defeated by the British with the help of the sepoys in 1815.

As a matter of fact, Indian sepoys, belonging to any part of the country, never refused to fight against Indians on behalf of the British. This has been shown repeatedly in all wars of the British during the first half of the 19th century.

Nothing but the strongest positive evidence should lead us to believe that the sepoys changed almost overnight into

patriotic Indians who risked their position and prospect, and even lives, merely for the sake of their country. No such evidence is, however, forthcoming.

Much stress has been laid on the proclamations issued by the various chiefs, urging the people to drive out the Firingis (British). But it should be remembered that this cry of driving out the British was not a new thing. Such a cry was raised freely, at the time of the rebellion of Chait Singh, in the very region of Avadh where it was prominently heard during 1857. Nobody can possibly deny that throughout the British rule there was an undercurrent of strong feeling of hostility against the British, and there arose on several occasions similar cries of driving away the Firingis. Numerous instances have been given above in Book I, Chap. III, where local Chiefs not only defied the British authority but even set up independent governments of their own. No particular importance need therefore be attached to such proclamations or risings in 1857, nor can we, for that reason alone, regard the outbreak as a war for freeing India from the British control.

The heroic fight against the British by some *Talukdars* of Avadh like Beni Madho has invested the whole class with a sort of sanctity as fighters for national freedom. Yet it should be remembered that with a very few exceptions the *Talukdars* did not show any active hostility against the British before the issue of the Confiscation Proclamation by Lord Canning on March 20, 1858, which threatened practically the whole body of *Talukdars* with the confiscation of their ill-gotten gain. It has been pointed out by Innes that "they had aided the fugitive (European) residents of outstations at the outbreak; they had helped Sir Henry Lawrence with supplies; with three exceptions they had held aloof from joining the rebel army, either personally or through their retainers...... they sent to the rebel camp only such contingents as were demanded and personally remained passive......they had abstained from harassing British troops—in marked contrast

with their conduct after the Proclamation was issued."[30] Although this statement may not be accurate in all details, its substantial truth cannot be challenged. It gives us a real insight into the motive of the *Talukdars*. The great majority of them had to fight for retaining possession of the lands which they had recovered by force from the auction-purchasers, and quite a considerable number, faced with the alternatives of loss of property and probably also of life, and the fight to the last, chose the latter and more honourable course.

As regards the rank and the file they faithfully observed the traditional policy of following the master of the moment, as very pertinently pointed out by Sir Syed Ahmad. "The Indians believe," says he, "that there is no crime in serving the master, and they should obey the ruler of the moment. So a large number of otherwise well-disposed men went over to the side of the rebels and espoused their cause."[31]

Many contemporary Englishmen have made similar observations. According to Sir John Lawrence, "many sepoys did not at first join the mutineers, but fear and temptation decided their course of action. They were threatened with social ostracism, and the temptation to plunder these treasuries (at outway stations) was too great for the virtue of our best disposed native troops."[32]

"Hundreds, perhaps thousands, committed themselves simply from the force of circumstances ; on the one hand threatened with fire and sword if they refused, on the other plunder and social advantages were pressed on them. Many hesitated long, but seeing no vitality in our power, no prospect of succour, they concluded that the game was up and began to act for themselves[33]."

If the Chiefs were really inspired by a grim determination to drive away the English and free their country from foreign yoke, they should have sunk all petty differences among themselves and joined in a united effort to fight against the

Uttar Pradesh, Dayaram of Aligarh and Bijoy Singh of Kunja, near Rurki, opposed a greater resistance to the British authority, without any external help, than Beni Madho and others in the same Province did in 1857-8. So if we regard the outbreak of 1857-8 as a war of independence, we must regard such war to be in continuous operation in more extensive regions in India, almost throughout the first century of British rule. There is no special reason to select the rising of 1857-8 in U. P. as specially befitting this designation in preference to many others occurring before it.

As a matter of fact we can hardly expect a national war of independence in India either in 1857 or at any time before it. For nationalism or patriotism, in the true sense, was conspicuous by its absence in India till a much later date. To regard the outbreak of 1857 as either national in character or a war for independence of India betrays a lack of true knowledge of the history of Indian people in the nineteenth century.

The example of Syed Ahmad Khan, noted above, is of peculiar significance. He was a staunch supporter of the British during the Mutiny and yet rose to be the undisputed leader of Muslims in U. P. This proves the absence of a strong national feeling in favour of the Mutiny even within a short time of its suppression.

As a matter of fact it is clear from a perusal of contemporary literature that the Mutiny of 1857 did not evoke any sense of national feeling at the time, nor was it regarded as a national war of independence till the rise of national consciousness at the close of the nineteenth century. It is on record that the public meetings were held in many parts of India condemning the Mutiny, and congratulatory addresses, even illuminations, followed notable British victories[84]. Of course, we should not take all these at their face value. But taking everything into consideration it is difficult to conclude that the Mutiny was regarded at the time, or for many years afterwards, as a war of national independence.

Indeed it would be a travesty of truth to describe the revolt of the civil population as a national war of independence. National (?) it certainly was not, for, as noted above, the 'upsurge of the people' was limited to a comparatively narrow region of India, comprising at best the greater part of U. P. and a narrow zone to its east, west and south. The whole of Bengal, Assam, Orissa, Rajasthan, and greater parts of the Panjab, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, as well as the whole of India, south of the Narmada, hardly witnessed any overt act of rebellion on the part of the people.

But even within the narrow zone where the civil population revolted, there were considerable sections who were friendly to the English. The ruling Chiefs in the East Panjab, and the entire landed aristocracy of Bihar, with very few exceptions, firmly and consistently stood by the British Government. Even in Avadh and Rohilkhand, several Chiefs, including the Nawab of Rampur did the same. One of them, Derigbijah (Digbijay ?) Singh, gave shelter to Mowbray Thomson, one of the survivors of the Kanpur massacre, at considerable risk to himself. As mentioned above, the English-educated classes kept themselves aloof from the mutinous sepoys and were regarded as enemies by them ; also a number of sepoys even in the worst affected areas remained loyal to the British.[35]

The general attitude of the people towards the English, even in the worst affected areas, was not uniformly hostile. Charles Raikes, who was a Judge at Agra during the Mutiny, bears witness to this.[36] Apart from his own personal knowledge of the good feelings of the people in May, 1857, he refers to Messrs. Phillipps and Bramly, civil officers of considerable position and experience at Agra, who traversed the country in June 1857, from Furrukhabad and Etah in the Doab, and from Budaon in Rohilkhand, with a very small escort of three or four horsemen. They had been travelling for nearly a month amongst the villages, and on

their arrival at Agra declared, that "the villagers are all on our side, except some of the Mahomedans". Then Raikes continues:

"During this same entire month of June, Mr. Arthur Cocks, the Judge of Mynpoorie ; Mr. Watson the Magistrate of Allygurh ; Dr. Clark, young Mr. Outram of the Civil Service, Mr. Herbert Harington, and a few others heroically maintained their position, at or near Allygurh, after the mutiny and destruction of the station. It was because the people of the country were with and not against us, that this handful of volunteer horsemen were enabled to hold the post amidst the swarms of mutineers passing up the Grand Trunk Road to Delhi. The same thing went on in August and September; generally wherever the sepoys or low Mahomedan rabble were not, the English were safe ; some villagers, robbers by prescription, tradition, birth, and education, turned against us ; but after the fall of Delhi, and a short taste of anarchy, the bulk of the people were glad to see white face, even in the person of a revenue collector."

There are no good grounds to suppose that the experience recorded by Raikes was exceptional and not generally applicable to the country as a whole. Reference may be made in this connection to the many stories, left on record by the British fugitives themselves, of the sympathy, kindness and active help rendered to them by the Indians, not unoften at grave peril to themselves.

In a book called *Statements* of Native Fidelity*, anonymously published in 1858,[87] numerous instances are given of the help which the Indians offered, even at the risk of their own lives, to the helpless English men, women, and children, and this in many cases saved their lives. It is pleasant to recall that even in those days of fierce hatred and animosity against the Indians in general, liberal-minded Englishmen fully and freely acknowledged this sympathy and friendly attitude of the Indians towards the British.

The London *Times* wrote in July, 1857: "The general population has exhibited rather good-will than hostility towards us and in many cases effectual protection has been afforded to fugitives." Again it wrote: "Out of the whole population of thirty-four millions and a quarter, we do not think more than fifty thousand joined the ranks of the insurgents, and these were headed by chiefs of small note"[38]

Kaye has paid his generous tribute in the following words: —

"But the truth would not be satisfied if it were not narrated here that many compassionate and kindly acts on the part of the natives of the country relieved the darkness of the great picture of national crime. Many of the fugitives were succoured by the people in the rural districts through which they passed, and sent on their way in safety. In this good work men of all classes, from great landholders to humble sweepers took part, and endangered their own lives by saving those of the helpless Christians."

Another most significant fact, vouched for by several contemporary Indian writers, was the positive antipathy felt by a large section of Indians to the rebels; they had suffered so much in their hands that many sincerely prayed to God for the early restoration of British rule. Not only the goonda elements, but even the mutinous sepoys and other rebels, including Chiefs, were guilty of indiscriminate plunder and bloodshed. Many such incidents have been mentioned above. Tantia Topi himself has referred to such activities of the sepoys even while they were flying before the Englsh troops.[39] The following incident is reported in the Parliamentary Papers: "In the district of which Gaya was the capital, a zemindar proclaimed that the British Government was at an end, murdered every villager who opposed him, and parcelled out among his followers estates which did not belong to him. Bands of mutineers roamed at will over the country, plundered, destroyed public buildings, levied tribute, and

ravished the wives of respectable Hindoos."[40] There are no good grounds to believe that this was an exceptional case. To complete the picture, reference must be made to the tension between the Hindus and Muslims and racial animosity which have been discussed in detail in the preceding Section.

It has been urged, with reference to historical examples, that "only a determined minority takes an active part in a revolt or revolution while the overwhelming majority remains passive, and an interested section might openly align itself with the existing order......So long as a substantial majority sympathises with the main object of a movement it can claim a national status though universal active support may be wanting". Dr. S. N. Sen, who raises this point, also admits that so far as the outbreak of 1857 is concerned there is no evidence that such a general sympathy existed outside Avadh and Shahabad.[41]

We may therefore proceed to discuss whether the outbreak of 1857 may be regarded as a war of independence, even though restricted to a limited area and to certain sections of people within it. In order to reply to this question, it is necessary to have a clear and definite understanding as to the precise meaning of the phrase 'war of independence.' There are not a few who seem to think that any fight by any group of Indians against the British must be regarded as a struggle for independence. The validity of this contention may be easily tested by the two specific instances of the grim and prolonged struggle carried on against the British by the Pindaris and the Wahabis, in the first and third quarters of the 19th century.[42] There is no doubt about the severity of the struggle against the English in each case, backed by an organization to which the outbreak of 1857 could lay no claim. Yet, it would be absurd to maintain that the Pindaris fought for the independence of India. As to the Wahabis, they fought heroically against the English with a grim determination to drive them out of India in order to establish a *Dar-ul-*

Islam, or 'Kingdom of the Muslims.' They began to fight against the Sikhs with the same object, and when the British conquered the Panjab from the Sikhs, they simply transferred their hostility against the new power. Now, if we regard their fight against the English as a war of independence, by no logic can we withhold this nomenclature from the fight of the Wahabis against the Sikhs. In other words, we are reduced to the absurd position of regarding a war to drive out the Sikhs from the Panjab as an Indian war of independence.

These two examples serve to show that merely a fight against the English, even with the distinct object of driving them away, cannot be regarded as an Indian war of independence. The crucial point is the ultimate object with which such a fight is carried on, or rather the light in which the British are looked upon. It is clear that in the first case the British merely constituted a ruling authority, and the Pindaris would have fought in the same way against any Indian ruling power, if it stood in the way of their loot and plunder, as they did with the English. In the second case, the British were simply non-Muslims who had usurped the Muslim kingdom, and the Wahabis would, as they actually did, fight against any non-Muslim power in India with the same zeal as they showed against the English, if the security of religion demanded it. Thus the fight of the Pindaris and the Wahabis against the English cannot be regarded as struggle for independence, because to them the English stood as a symbol, either of ruling authority or of heretic religion, and not merely of an alien rule. In other words, they did not take up arms with the conscious and definite object of freeing India from foreign rule.

An analysis of historical examples would prove that a struggle for independence must have as its primary object the expulsion of foreign rulers, simply because they are foreigners, though there are usually many grievances against them which rouse the spirit of the people and impel them to such a struggle.

In the detailed picture that has been given above of the popular upsurge, even in Rohilkhand and Awadh, two things emerge quite clearly. In the first place, it had nothing to do with the achievement of independence or freedom from British control, for that task was already done for the people by the mutinous sepoys. If there was any war, it was for maintaining and not gaining independence.

Secondly, during the period of independence, thus gained, there is unimpeachable evidence to show that the people were engaged in all kinds of subversive activities, and individuals, classes, and States were fighting with one another for their own interests. On the other hand, one looks in vain for any evidence to show that the civil population realized the value and importance of the recovery of lost independence, and made an organized and determined effort to maintain it by evolving a suitable plan for defence. Anyone with a modicum of knowledge and common sense must have felt, that the avenging British forces were sure to come, sooner or later, to recover the lost dominions. But contemporary evidence leaves no doubt that many eminent leaders and local Chiefs, who had established their authority, discounted even the very possibility of such a contingency.

Reference may be made in this connection to a Proclamation issued by Nana Sahib which has been regarded as 'unique.'[43] It begins by saying that "the English who are 'Kaffurs'...have been endeavouring to delude and convert the population of this country by inducing them to abandon their own religion and caste, but, having failed by mild means to do this, they were about to use force." Then he goes on to say that "tyranny, wickedness and injustice having been much practised by the 'Kaffur' English on the faithful and sin-fearing, I have been commissioned by God to punish the 'Kaffurs' by annihilating them and to re-establish the Hindu and Mahomedan kingdoms, as formerly, and to protect our country, and I have conquered the country north of the Nurbuda river." The Proclamation then refers

to the very sad plight of the English. Not only did they lose India north of the Narmada, which was conquered by Nana, but they were "quarrelling and fighting and killing each other"; the French and the Russians "have been sending armies by sea these three months past" "to turn them (the English) out of Hindustan"; "the Chinese also have declared war against these 'Kaffurs' and the latter having no army to send against the Chinese are much alarmed. The Persians, Afghans and Baluchis moreover are ready with their armies collected to aid us." This Proclamation only provokes ridicule and contempt by the absurd claims made by Nana, but even taking the best view, Nana here assumes the role of the defender of Hindu religion. As the Proclamation ends with a threat to punish all those who would not join Nana on this occasion to drive away the English, it loses the character of a declaration of war of independence by the people, even if anybody seeks to put this complexion upon it.

There is thus no positive evidence in support of the view that the people were inspired by a sense of patriotism to fight for retaining the freedom of the country which they had obtained so cheaply and unexpectedly without having to wage any war. It has been urged that the very fact that the people and the Chiefs fought heroically against the British when the days of retribution came, proves that they fought for independence. But, as has already been pointed out above, mere fight against the British does not constitute a war of independence. One must look to the object of the fight. In the particular case before us the most obvious inference is that the people fought for retaining what they had wrongfully secured, and avoiding chastisement, unless there is clear evidence to show that they were inspired by patriotism or any such noble and disinterested motive. The protracted or heroic character of the resistance against the avenging British forces cannot, by itself, be regarded as such evidence. For the people had burnt their boats and had only two alternatives before them, either to fight or lose everything, including their lives in many cases.

Besides, the incredible and indiscriminate cruelty ,with which the masses were treated by the British must have told the people what to expect from them, and stiffened their backs.

Until 1957, the view that the outbreak of 1857 was the first national war of independence in India rested generally on sentimental effusion, and was not critically considered with reference to historical facts. In that year an eminent historian, Dr. S. N. Sen, has lent his qualified support to it. As such it deserves a detailed consideration.

Dr. S. N. Sen has observed: "What began as a fight for religion ended as a war of independence for there is not the slightest doubt that the rebels wanted to get rid of the alien government and restore the old order of which the King of Delhi was the rightful representative."[44] It is not quite clear whether this remark applies to the Mutiny or the revolt of the civil population, or both. In any case, it is difficult to accept this view unless we believe that any fight against the English is to be construed as a war of independence, a point that has already been discussed above. Besides, it is to be remembered that when the civil population began to fight against the English, Bahadur Shah had long been a prisoner in the hands of the British, and had even ceased to be a symbol.

Immediately after the sentence quoted above, Dr. Sen observes that "in Oudh, however, the revolt assumed a national dimension", though, as he himself points out, "the term must be used in a limited sense, for the conception of Indian nationality was yet in embryo".[45] The basis for his view is his belief that "the patriots of Oudh fought for their king and country", although, as he admits, "they were not champions of freedom."[46] Unfortunately, he did not develop this very important idea in the body of his book, with full reference to facts and figures, but made this remark in the course of a brief review at the very end. In particular, he does not make it quite clear whether he regards the Chiefs and

people of Awadh as patriots because they fought for their king and country, or whether he regarded as patriots only those who fought for their king and country. But, then, he does not give us any idea of their number. In any case, the main argument in support of this view seems to be the spirited reply of Muhammad Hasan to the letter of Sheikh Khairuddin.[47] As mentioned above, Hasan maintained that the rebellion of the Princes and peoples of Hindustan "arose solely out of the annexation of Oude. Had that not taken place there would have been no bloodshed, because no defection of the Chiefs, who would have on the contrary inflicted chastisement on the sepoys." Later, Hasan maintains that the "servants and dependants of the King of Oude," among whom he includes himself, looked upon the fight against the English as "essential to our prosperity in both worlds.". But it is not easy to understand why the Princes and people of Hindustan, living outside the dominion of Awadh, would find themselves in the same predicament. Such a general statement shows that Hasan assumed the outbreak of 1857 to be a war for independence of Awadh and not of India, and his generalisation, even if restricted to the Chiefs and people of Awadh, may justly be regarded as suspect. We know of another Chief, Beni Madho, who, when asked to surrender, agreed to evacuate the fort, presumably because he looked upon it as his property, but refused to surrender his person, as he was a subject of the Nawab of Awadh and not of the British Government. There is nothing to show how far any of them represented correctly the views of the rebels as a body or indeed of any one but himself. But besides these two personal statements there is no other fact or document to prove that "the patriots of Oudh fought for their king and country." On the other hand, there are certain considerations which strongly militate against this view. Only a year before the Mutiny the King of Awadh was ignominiously driven from his country, but 'the patriots of Oudh' did not raise even their little finger on behalf of their king or country.

Even if it be assumed that they had developed their love for their king and the country almost overnight, or that the Mutiny gave them an opportunity to display their loyalty and patriotism which they dared not show before, should not one expect to see them all flocking in a body to join the force of the Begam of Awadh and concert measures of defence without any other thought in their minds? But as shown above, this was far from being the case. By far the large majority of the people and Chiefs, formed into isolated groups, were busy securing their own interests, and even Hasan himself remained loyal and friendly to the English until, as he says, he received the peremptory command of his Chief. Many, if not most of the Chiefs threw in their lot with the rebels only when the retreat of Havelock convinced them that the British Raj was doomed.[47a]

If one concedes the claim that 'the patriots of Oudh' fought for their king and country alone, they are automatically excluded from the general war of independence, if there were any, outside this area. As Muhammad Hasan clearly says: "My business is with the King of Oude". As regards Rohilkhand, the only other prominent area affected by the revolt, Dr. Sen himself admits that the "masses in the district (of Bijnor) were not behind the revolt, and the movement there had degenerated into communal strife. Moradabad, for all practical purposes, was under the control of the loyal Nawab of Rampur. Even in the rest of the province the new regime was not popular."[48] He accepts the view that the recruits of the rebel chief, Khan Bahadur Khan of Bareilly, "were attracted by prospects of employment and had no enthusiasm for any particular cause. Thousands of poor people flocked to the British camp for the same reason. The common folk went wherever they could find employment".[49] The state of things in the North-West Provinces, as a whole, as described by him, was not much different, and Bihar was very slightly affected. This detailed analysis as well as that of other parts of India,[50] judged by the general principle

enunciated by him and quoted above,[51] goes definitely against the popular view that the outbreak of 1857 was a war of independence at least in the territory now comprised in Uttar Pradesh, and even his own view that it was true of Awadh.

It would thus appear that the outbreak of the civil population in 1857 may be regarded as a war of independence only if we take that term to mean any sort of fight against the British. But, then, the fight of the Pindaris against the English[52] and the fight of the Wahabis against the Sikhs in the Panjab should also be regarded as such. Those who demur to it should try to find out how much the rebels in 1857 were prompted by motives of material interest and religious consideration which animated, respectively, the Pindaris and the Wahabis, and how much by the disinterested and patriotic motive of freeing the country from the yoke of foreigners. Apart from individual cases, here and there, no evidence has yet been brought to light which would support the view that the patriotic motive of freeing the country formed the chief incentive to the general outbreak of the people. It is therefore difficult to regard the outbreak of 1857 as a war of independence, far less a national movement of this type, at least in the present state of our knowledge.

In conclusion, attention may be drawn to the rebellion of Surendra Sai at Sambalpur in 1827[53] and that of the Santals in 1856.[54] If the later rebellion of the same Surendra Sai in 1857 for the same cause, and carried on in the same manner, may be regarded as a war of independence, there is no reason why the earlier rebellion should not be honoured by the same epithet. As regards the Santal rebellion, it would bear comparison with that of Shahabad[55] in 1857-8, as regards the intensity of anti-British spirit, organization, and geographical area. If, therefore, the isolated outbreaks in 1857 in different areas are to be regarded as war of independence,

it is difficult to deny the same honour to the arduous struggle carried on by the Santals or Surendra Sai, and perhaps many others described in Book I, Chapter III. The outbreak of 1857 has, therefore, little claim to be hailed as the first war of independence.

On the whole, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the so-called First National War of Independence of 1857 is neither the First, nor National, nor a War of Independence.

The reasons why Indians at the beginning of the twentieth century held a different view of the Mutiny are not far to seek. The first and the foremost was, of course, the deliberate desire of the nationalist and revolutionary parties to hold up before the people a concrete example of a grim struggle for freedom against the British which might serve as a precedent and inspiration for the new generation which was about to launch a similar campaign. But even if we leave aside this or similar sentimental ground, there were also historical reasons for interpreting the Mutiny in a different light. The people of the twentieth century were so much obsessed with the idea of *pax Britannica*, and so impregnated with a sense of British invincibility, that they could not bring themselves to believe that local people or Chiefs could dare or choose to rise against the authority of the Government unless there was an impelling motive or a great organisation behind it. They could not visualise the fact that half a century before things were very different. The last embers of the anarchical conflagration, set ablaze by the fall of the Mughal Empire, had not yet died down, and during the first hundred years of British rule many local chiefs and primitive tribes did not hesitate to hurl defiance against the British authority. The chaos and anarchy in Central India were still within living memory. We have given above a detailed account of the series of civil outbreaks—some of them assuming serious proportions—that occurred during the period. It has also been shown that some of the local revolts during

Confirmation and illustration of what we have said above meet us at almost every step as we go through the detailed story of the outbreak of the civil population in 1857-8. Reference may be made, for example, to the state of Bundelkhand. No Indian ever thinks of the great outbreak of 1857 without conjuring up in his mind's eye the vision of the heroic struggle of the Rani of Jhansi, a young lady taking up arms with the cry *mere Jhansi nehi denge* (I will not give up my Jhansi), rallying the whole country to the fight for freedom, and dying sword in hand while fighting against the English. The actual state of affairs was, however, very different. It is not necessary to repeat what has been said above, about the part played by the sepoys and the Rani in the mutiny at Jhansi that took place early in June, 1857. But it is definitely known that the mutinous sepoys left for Delhi immediately after they extorted as much money from the Rani as they could, without any further care or thoughts of her. As soon as the sepoys left Jhansi and other places in the neighbourhood, and the British authority was liquidated, the Thakoors or landed chiefs of Jhansi thwarted the authority of the Rani, and to make matters worse, the hereditary enemies of her family such as the Chiefs of Datia and Orchha invaded Jhansi. The poor Rani sent piteous appeals to the British Commissioner at Saugor for money and troops, and pointed out, after a detailed account of the situation, that without such help she could not hope to maintain her authority. As a matter of fact, for the next eight months, the Rani had to fight, not against the British for independence of India, but against her own neighbours and subjects for her very existence. We have got a fairly good picture of the state of Bundelkhand in those days,—Indian chiefs fighting against one another, some of them befriending the English for securing their help against rival chiefs, others helping the British at first then changing or forced to change their attitude by unjust suspicion of the latter, brought out in no small measure by the machinations of their Indian enemies; mutinous sepoys and even Tantia's

troops fighting against Indian chiefs; the petty local chiefs busy with establishment of their own authority and enriching themselves by all unscrupulous means; plunder and murder going on all sides and security of life and property vanishing like a dream. This hardly fits in with the romantic picture of Jharsi as the centre of a national war of independence. And what about the heroic leader of this war? She had to carry on fight against her own kinsmen and rival Indian chiefs, and to the very last, i.e. till at least March, 1858, when the curtain was slowly falling over the great drama in Northern India, she was yet undecided whether she would fight against the British or make alliance with them. As a matter of fact, there are good grounds to believe that if the British Government of India had not taken up a definitely hostile attitude towards her owing to the malicious misrepresentations of the Rani of Orchha and others, and accepted her protestations of innocence, she would have readily handed over the district of Jhansi which she was managing on behalf of the British according to their directions, and would never have taken resort to arms against the British. Even when Sir Hugh Rose was marching with his force against Jhansi, there was a council of war, and one party was in favour of submission and the other party was for war. Even Tantia Topi is said to have advised her not to fight against the English. She agreed, and sent an agent to Hamilton, the representative of the Government of India accompanying the force of Hugh Rose. But, as the Commissioner had previously refused her overtures and did not even deign to reply to her letters, so Hamilton kept her agents as virtual prisoners in his camp without sending any reply. It was thus quite clearly evident to the Rani that her fate was sealed. She had then only two alternatives before her, either to surrender and face trial as a war-criminal for the massacre of British troops during the mutiny, or to die a heroic death in the battlefield; for even the greatest idiot then alive could not hope for the success of the revolt against the British after they had broken its

backbone and had to face only a rally of straggling forces in isolated pockets. It reflects the greatest credit on the personality and character of Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi that she chose the latter alternative and preferred to die with honour rather than willingly submit to a trial on a charge of murdering the British, the outcome of which could never be in doubt. But nothing can be more erroneous than to associate her name with a struggle for independence, either of Jhansi or of India.

The condition of Avadh and Bundelkhand, sketched above, may be taken as fairly illustrative of that part of India where the revolt of the non-military element against the British took the most acute form. We cannot miss the analogy it offers to the anarchical condition which prevailed in India a century before. Indeed if we calmly review the whole situation without any prejudice or sentiment, we cannot but regard the civil outbreak in 1857 as belonging to that type which characterises a political vacuum caused by the sudden removal of political stability, or destruction, true or imaginary, of the central political authority as a controlling factor. Viewed in this light the outbreak of 1857 would appear, not as the first phase of the war of independence, but as the last phase of India under Free Lances which commenced since the fall of the Mughal power. The miseries and bloodshed of 1857-58 were not the birth-pang of a freedom movement in India, but the dying groans of an obsolete aristocracy and centrifugal feudalism of the mediaeval age.

Many look upon the outbreak of 1857 as something sudden, unexpected and unaccountable. But this is not a correct view. It is not generally recognised that *pax Britannica* took a century to develop and nothing like undisturbed peace prevailed over India during that time. A patient study of Chapters II and III in Book I would convince any one that all the elements of discontent and disaffection which combined to produce the great conflagra-

tion in 1857 were not only present, but made themselves felt in sporadic outbursts, throughout the previous century. Only their unique combination and the vast scale of operations, made possible by the successful mutiny of the sepoys, distinguished the outbreak of 1857.

The mutiny of local sepoys was not a new thing. There were no less than twenty previous occasions on which they had openly defied the authority of their officers. In particular the mutiny of soldiers at Vellore in 1806 shows, in all essential particulars, a strong analogy to the mutiny of 1857. The participation of civil population in the Mutiny was foreshadowed by the many instances of open resistance against the British as described in Book I, Chapter III,—even the war cry of driving out the British has its exact counterpart in these earlier efforts. The lawless elements which joined the Mutiny to serve their own ends and robbed alike the British and the Indians, were common factors in all outbreaks during the century preceding the Mutiny.

The challenge of British authority by leaders like Nana Sahib, Rani of Jhansi, Ahmadulla, Kunwar Singh and others had precedents in the revolt of Chait Singh, Wazir Ali, Velu Thampi and a score of others, as mentioned above.

In short the first century of British rule in India set the stage for, and witnessed many rehearsals, though in parts, of the great tragic drama which was to celebrate the centenary of its foundation in blood and tears.

FOOTNOTES

1. The relevant passages from these two British Journals are quoted in *Krishtadas Pal* (p. 126) by N. Ghosh, as well as in the book (p. 1) referred to in the next footnote.

2. *The Mutinies, the Government and the People* by a Hindu (Calcutta, 1858). Though anonymous, it is now known to be the work of Kishorichand Mitra.

3. *The Mutinies and the People or Statements of Native Fidelity exhibited during the outbreak of 1857-8*, by a Hindu (Calcutta, 1859). Though anonymous, it is now known to be the work of Sambhuchandra Mukhopadhyaya.

4. *Bengal Celebrities*, p. 75.

5. *SAK*, xvi.

6. Jiwanlal Munshi, Moinuddin, and Durgadas Bandyopadhyaya, mentioned above, p. 248, fn. 3; 330.

7. Jadunath Sarvadhikari, in his Bengali book *Tīrtha-bhramaṇa* (Pilgrimage), gives a long account of the mutiny and describes the oppression of the people by the sepoys in Varanasi and other neighbouring places.

8. He recorded his impressions in a book entitled *Majha Prabas* (My Journey), which commenced in March, 1857, and took him to various theatres of military operations. I am indebted to Dr. A.D. Pusalker for having translated for me relevant portions of this Marathi book in English.

9. Griffiths, p. 259.

10. Ibid.

11. Publisher's Note in the Edition of 1947, p. vii.

12. MS. L, Vol. No. 725, pp. 1011-16.

13. Parliamentary Paper, House of Commons. Accounts and Papers 1857-8. Vol. XLIII (p. 411—written in hand—there is no consecutive page-numbering).

14. See p. 131.

15. Raikes, 137.

16. Russell, p. 380.

17. Raikes, 175.

18. Roberts—I, p. 119.

19. Coopland, 104.

20. *FS*, IV. App. A, p. i. Sir Alfred Lyall, at that time a young civilian in the Agra Province, "put the whole rebellion down to them (Muhammadans)" (Lovett, *A History of Indian Nationalist Movement*, p. 14). The whole of the English Press in Calcutta regarded it as a Muhammadan rebellion (H. S. Cunningham, *Earl Canning*, p. 152).

21. *Siege*, 279-80.

22. *SAK*, 9.

23. K. III, 288.

24. K. III, 290 ff. In addition to the two Proclamations of Khan Bahadur Khan of Bareilly, we possess copies of Proclamations issued by Bargis Çadr of Awadh and Liaqat Ali of Allahabad, all urging the Muslims to rise against the English in the name of religion. The

Proclamation issued under the seal of Bargis Qadr, Wali of Awadh, addressed to "all the Muslims residing in Oudh, Rampur, Moradabad, etc." begins with a quotation from the Quran from which it draws the conclusion that friendship with Christians is heresy and hence it is a duty of all the Muslims to make themselves inveterate foes of these Christians. Throughout, it contains the exhortation to the Muslims to rise against the English and extirpate them, by holding out the dire consequences that would follow to the Muslims if the English got victory. The Proclamation, issued by Khan Bahadur Khan of Bareilly, appeals to both Hindus and Muslims to protect their religion and property from the Europeans. The other Proclamations are also of a similar character.

25. *CTM*, 98-99.

26. MS. L. Vol. 726, p. 313.

27. Printed Report by Taylor, dated 15th October, 1858. MS. L. Vol. 726, p. 826.

28. Blunt, *India under Lord Ripon*, 164.

29. H. G. Briggs, *The Nizam*, II. 84-6.

30. Innes, 244-5. According to Malleson "there were not a dozen land-owners in Oudh who had not, in some way or other, assisted the rebels, and that, therefore, there would be but few exceptions to the sweeping confiscations proposed by the Governor-General." (M. III. 251).

31. *SAK*, 47-8.

32. *AS*, 112.

33. Ibid, 188.

34. The British Indian Association in Calcutta condemned the Mutiny in a formal resolution ; many other public bodies sent petitions and addresses to the Government condemning the Mutiny. Illuminations and festivities were held at Agra on the fall of Delhi (*NF*, 220, 225, 188.)

35. See above, pp. 396-7.

36. For his views quoted, cf. Raikes, 156 ff.

37. See footnote 3 above.

38. See f.n., 1.

39. See pp. 300 ff.

40. Quoted in Holmes, 451.

41. Sen, 411.

42. For the Pindaris, cf. *An Advanced History of India* (pp. 723-25) by R. C. Majumdar (and others). For the Wahabis, see above, p. 58.

43. *Freedom—Bombay*, I. 253. The text of the Proclamation is given in pp. 253-4.

44. Sen, 411.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid, 412.

47. Ibid, 385, ff.

47a. See above, pp. 135, 162.

48. Sen, 409.

49. Ibid, 409-10.

50. Ibid, 407-11.

51. P. 416.

52. This does not, of course, mean that the generality of the people who fought against the English for personal or material interest belonged to the category of the Pindaris. The object is merely to draw attention to the underlying principle by an extreme analogy. But one class of the civil population, who swelled the number of rebels, such as the Gujars, Banjars, Ranghars and other similar predatory tribes, offers a close analogy to the Pindaris.

53. See p. 143.

54. See pp. 64-65.

55. See p. 141.

56. See pp. 13 ff.

CHAPTER III

THE CAUSES OF THE MUTINY

Having discussed the character of the great outbreak, we are now in a position to probe into its causes.

As pointed out above, there can be hardly any doubt that the outbreak was at first purely a military one. As a matter of fact, for a long period after the manifestation of discontent and disaffection by the sepoys and their defiance of the authorities, there was no general commotion among the civil population. It was not till some time after the mutinous sepoys at Mirat had killed their officers, marched to Delhi, and there declared Bahadur Shah to be the Emperor of Hindusthan, that the spirit of revolt spread among the civil population.

The successful mutiny of the sepoys was the precursor of the outbreak of the civil population. If there were no mutiny, there would have been no revolt. It is, therefore, necessary to find out, first, the causes of the mutiny of the sepoys.

Mention has been made above of the grave discontent and disaffection towards the British rule among all classes of people.[1] There is no doubt that the sepoys were largely affected by them. But in addition there were special grievances felt by the sepoys as described above.[2] It has also been shown how they gave public exhibition of their strong resentment and disaffection, and not infrequently local units broke out into mutiny.

The sensitiveness of the sepoys to their religious beliefs and practices and the dread of conversion to Christianity worked as a nightmare upon their minds. Several mutinies were caused by such apprehensions, however ill-founded they might be. There can be hardly any doubt that this was the

most potent cause of distrust and discontent. In 1856, one year before the mutiny, the annexation of Awadh served as another serious cause of discontent. The sepoys, who were mostly recruited from Awadh, were provoked beyond measure by the unjust and forcible seizure of the State by the British in violation of treaty rights and considerations of equity, and in spite of long-standing alliance and never-failing loyalty of the Nawabs of Awadh.

Since the mutiny of 1857 there have been long discussions and much speculation regarding its causes. Among the numerous statements that have appeared regarding the discontent and disaffection of the sepoys, special importance attaches to those of contemporary native officers of the British army. We possess a long memorandum[3] on this subject prepared by Shaikh Hidayat Ali, Subadar and Sirdar Bahadur, Bengal Sikh Police Battalion, which was commanded by Captain T. Rattaray. It is dated 7th August, 1858, and was submitted to the Government of India.

In addition to the disaffection and mutinous spirit of the sepoys during the First Afghan War and in subsequent years mentioned above, Hidayat laid stress on the following:

1. Indignation of the sepoys at the annexation of Avadh to which province many of them belonged.

2. When recruiting sepoys after the annexation of the Panjab, the Government promised both the Sikhs and Muslims that they would not be asked to remove their beard or hair. But later on orders were passed for removing them, and those who refused to do so were dismissed.

3. The messing system in jails, forcing the *purdah* ladies to go to the newly built hospital at Shaharanpur, and the general missionary propaganda created alarm and suspicion. The sepoys thought that the missionaries would not have dared to preach such things as giving up *purdah*, early marriage, circumcision, etc. without the consent of the Government.

4. This suspicion was confirmed by the issue of a general order in September, 1856, to the effect that all new recruits must take an oath that they would be prepared to go wherever they were required.

5. Lastly came the greased cartridge which convinced them that the Government was determined to make them lose caste and embrace Christianity.

According to Hidayat Ali, the grievances of the sepoys might be divided into three categories, viz., political or sentimental (No. 1), material (non-payment of extra allowances), and religious (Nos. 2-5). Without minimising the importance of the first two, he leaves no doubt that the main cause was the religious. Incidents almost immediately preceding the mutiny seem to prove it beyond doubt. There was an incipient mutiny at Bolarum near Hyderabad in 1855.[4] Brigadier Mackenzie had issued a cantonment order, prohibiting processions on Sunday, September 23. But as the Muharram procession of the Muslims was due to be taken out on that day, the order was withdrawn. But the new order did not get sufficient publicity and processions were prohibited in many localities. The cavalry men as a protest took the procession along the road on which the Brigadier's house was situated, although this route was prohibited even by the revised order. The Brigadier personally met the processionists and asked them to disperse. The processionists made an insolent reply to the effect that the road was theirs, and the angry Colonel snatched away two of their flags. Shortly afterwards, when he was taking his evening drive along with some other ladies and gentlemen, a murderous attack was made on them. It is significant to note that the cavalrymen bluntly told a military officer that their relgion was dearer to them than their lives, that it had been insulted, and that they would never lay down their arms until they had brought the Brigadier and the Brigade Major to a court. A vague dread that the Government was determined, by hook or by crook, to convert the

Indians, both Hindus and Muslims, into Christianity, had pervaded all ranks of society and the sepoys fully shared this apprehension with the rest. Today we smile at this, for we know that nothing was further from the mind of the Government than such a thought. But the men of 1857 did not know what we know today, and we must judge their actions by what they actually felt, whether there were sufficient and reasonable grounds for such feelings or not. Anyone who carefully reads the accounts of those times will be convinced, not only about the actuality of such fears in the minds of all alike, but, what is more important, also that there were good grounds for such apprehension. The aggressive attitude of the Christian missionaries in Calcutta, in matters of proselytisation, had been frequent subjects of complaint even by the most learned and aristocratic citizens, and they had seriously to think of suitable means to stop it. The less educated classes not only took their cue from them, but were further moved by the new legislations prohibiting *sati* or burning of widows, legalisation of the remarriage of widows, as well as open and unchecked denunciation of their cherished social usages and customs in most violent language, and filthy abuses of their gods and goddesses, by bands of Christian missionaries. The opening of western education for girls was regarded as an instrument by which the missionaries could invade their zenana, the natural citadel of their orthodoxy. The teaching of Christian doctrines was made compulsory in the girls' schools specially founded by them. That the main object of these missionaries was to use these schools as means of preaching Christianity will be clear from the following passage in the proceedings of one of these schools: —"Some others now engaged in the degrading and polluting worship of idols shall be brought to the knowledge of the true God and Jesus Christ."

Referring to the names of girls such as Vishnupriya, Annapurna, Digambari, Golakmani *etc.* the following observations are made: "What kind of conduct ought we to expect

from these poor children, named by their parents after imaginary goddesses, whose adultery, cruelty and gratification of their passions, as detailed by their own sacred writings, are so abominable?"[5]

Even early in the nineteenth century there was a strong feeling and also a considerable amount of agitation against what the Hindus regarded as conversion to Christianity by force or fraud, and in 1846 a memorial was sent by the Hindu community of Madras against Christian missionaries as well as highly placed English officials, including Governors. That such apprehensions were not altogether unfounded is proved by a minute recorded by the Governor of Madras in 1806 in which he draws attention to the importance of converting the Hindus and Muslims into Christianity.[6]

It is also proved by a series of letters written and widely distributed by Mr. Edmond. "These letters were addressed generally to the public, but particularly to those holding respectable appointments in the service of the State. The purport of these letters was that as all India obeyed one Government—as all parts of the country kept up constant communication one with the other by means of the electric telegraph, —and as the Railway systems united the different extremes of this great Peninsula, it was necessary that there should be but one religion also, and proper, therefore, that everyone should embrace Christianity."[7]

Its effect is thus described by Syed Ahmad: "These letters so *terrified* the natives that they were as people struck blind, or from under whose feet the ground had suddenly slipped away. All felt convinced that the hour so long anticipated had at last arrived, and that the servants of the Government first, and then the whole population would have to embrace Christianity. No doubt whatever was entertained as to these letters having been forwarded by the orders of the Government."[8]

The strong dislike of missionary activities and the grave danger of mass conversions of the Hindus and Muslims to

Christianity, which the sepoys shared with the general public, were specially brought home to them by missionary propaganda within the military cantonments. Lt. Col. Wheler, the commanding officer of a sepoy regiment at Barrackpur, used to distribute religious tracts among the sepoys and openly addressed them with a view to proselytise. He is also known to have met the sepoys at his bungalow and tried to persuade them to accept Christianity. It is on record that for these kinds of activities he was once violently expelled by the sepoys from their lines, and on another occasion ordered off the parade of a Regiment at Delhi. He wrote to the Christian Tract Society in 1840 that he had several applications from different officers for native tracts in order to distribute to the villages through which they were about to march. Referring to this the *Englishman* of Calcutta, in its issue of 2nd April, 1857, commented as follows: 'Unless we are very greatly misinformed he (Wheler) continues the practice even with increased zeal to the present day. It was no wonder therefore that the men should be in an excited state specially when such efforts at conversion are openly avowed, and that they would discover what they considered a plot to betray them into a loss of caste'. The name of another military missionary, Major Mackenzie, may be referred to in this connection. Sir Thomas Munro raised a strong voice of protest against this business of distributing religious tracts by the military, but the Government did not take the guilty officers to task.[9] No wonder, therefore, that in spite of professions to the contrary, the sepoys would regard the Government as playing false with them and really aiming at the wholesale conversion of them to Christianity. Their apprehensions were increased by the regulations and practices mentioned by Hidayat Ali, as well as legislation to facilitate conversion to Christianity. "A law passed in 1832, supplemented by another in 1850, removed all disabilities due to change of religion." The highest courts in all the three Presidencies decreed that young inexperienced

Hindu converts, instead of being placed under the guardianship of their parents, were to be forcibly made over with their wives to the missionaries against their will. On one occasion the Judge, who delivered such a judgment, was stoned by the people who surrounded the court, and the military had to be called in to save the situation. Commenting on this incident an Indian wrote a letter to the *Hindu Patriot* on April 30, 1857, that "one such instance, and not ten thousand false rumours circulated by the native press, is sufficient to disaffect whole nation towards their rulers."[10]

In a letter to Lord Canning, dated May 9, 1857, Sir Henry Lawrence gives an account of his conversation with a Brahman Native Officer of Oudh Artillery who was most persistent in his belief that the Government was determined to make the people of India Christians. He alluded specially to the Order, recently promulgated to the effect 'that, after the first September, 1856, no native recruit shall be accepted who does not, at the time of his enlistment, undertake to serve beyond the sea whether within the territories of the Company or beyond them.' Lawrence says that with all his arguments and persuasions he was unable to convince the Officer that the Government had no such intention.[11]

This was mainly due to the repeated breaches of pledges by the Government in respect of their allowances, as mentioned above.[12] The facts and circumstances that created in the minds of the people a vague dread of mass conversion to Christianity, strengthened by the letters of Edmond[13] and activities of Wheler, brought home to the mind of the sepoys the grave and imminent peril which threatened their religion.[14] And this feeling worked upon minds thoroughly disaffected against the British for many years past. A discerning eye could see that the mine was loaded and the train prepared, and the spark may be easily furnished by any inflammable passion.[15] The story of the greased cartridge supplied the spark and caused an explosion which

shook the British Empire in India to its very foundations. There is hardly any doubt that cartridge was not only the apparent but also the real cause of the mutiny.[16]

If we remember the tense situation, then existing, we can easily understand the effect of the story of the greased cartridge on the minds of the sepoys. All available evidence indicates that it had a tremendous repercussion on the sepoys scattered over this vast country. The story spread like wildfire and produced excitement and consternation all over the sepoy world. There is no doubt that letters were exchanged between sepoys, widely separated in localities far distant from one another. Many of these letters, intercepted by the Government, indicate a strong belief on the part of the sepoys that it was a deliberate device adopted by the Government to destroy their religion, and a grim determination to resist it even at the cost of their lives.

Many contemporary British writers have admitted the influence of the cartridge question over the mutiny, though others have regarded it merely as a pretext. Mr. Edwards, the Collector and Magistrate of Budaon, a hot centre of the mutiny, wrote: "I most solemnly declare my belief that with the mass of our soldiers the dread of these cartridges was the immediate and the most powerful cause of their revolt. Again and again have I discussed this subject with natives before, during, and subsequent to the rebellion......the cartridges formed the real and proximate cause of the mutiny. The rural classes, who afterwards broke out into rebellion, had other causes which moved them."[17]

Lord Canning more or less held the same view. In a letter to Lord Elphinstone, dated May 6, 1857, he wrote: "It is not possible to say with confidence what the causes are, but with the common herd there is a sincere fear for their caste, and a conviction that this has been in danger from the cartridge and other causes. This feeling is played upon by others from outside, and to some extent, with political objects. But, upon

the whole, political animosity does not go for much in the present movement, and certainly does not actuate the Sepoys in the mass."[18] On May 19, 1857, he wrote to the Chairman of the Court of Directors: "I have learnt unmistakably that the apprehension of some attempt upon caste is growing stronger, or at least is more sedulously spread...But political animosity goes for something among the causes, though it is not, in my opinion, a chief one."[19] About the same time, he wrote to the Indian Minister at home that he had not a doubt that the rebellion had been fomented "by Brahmins on religious pretences, and by others for political motives."[20]

Sir John Lawrence observes as follows in a minute, dated April 9, 1858: "It is my decided impression that the mutiny had its origin in the army itself, and was simply taken advantage of by disaffected persons in the country to compass their own ends. It is, moreover, my belief that the cartridge question was the immediate cause of the mutiny. I have examined many hundreds of letters from native soldiers and civilians, and have conversed with natives of all classes on the subject, and am satisfied that the general, I might almost add that the universal, opinion in this part of India is such as I have above stated."[21]

We may, therefore, reasonably conclude that the real and immediate cause of the Mutiny was the fear of violating caste rules and laws of religions purity by using greased cartridges. As a matter of fact, so far as public records are available, it is only this ground which the sepoys repeatedly urged before their superior officers as to the cause of their discontent, and it was only in relation to those cartridges that they showed open defiance against their officers. The other causes might be regarded as, more or less, contributory, in a rather remote sense, but the direct and the most important cause must have been the religious scruples to which the Hindus and Muslims are peculiarly sensitive.

Both the Hindus and the Muslims had a strong repulsion against anything that was calculated to violate their ceremo-

nial and religious purity, and nothing could be more repugnant to them than the idea, that they would have to bite with their teeth the cartridges which were greased with the fat of cows and pigs. If anybody wanted to devise a sure means to excite the sepoys against the Government, he could not have done better than giving out such a story. As a matter of fact, there is a belief in some quarters that the story was deliberately spread or given wide publicity merely to create disaffecticn among the sepoys. It may be that some of the leaders who afterwards made themselves so prominent, adopted this course in order to gain the soldiers on their side. But there is no evidence in support of this belief. The Government of those days must have strained their utmost to discover such proof if there were any, but so far nothing has been found.

In judging of the effect of the story of greased cartridges on the minds of the sepoys and the justice or reasonableness of their obstinate refusal to use them, we must remember the very essential fact, often ignored, that the story was undoubtedly a true one. The Government as well as the high military officials denied the allegation that the cartridges were prepared with any objectionable materials, but the sepoys refused to believe them. It is now definitely proved that the sepoys were right, and the military officers undoubtedly suppressed the truth,—whether deliberately or through ignorance, it is difficult to say.

In a book entitled *Mutiny of the Bengal Army*, written by a military official in India immediately after the Mutiny we read: "The Enfield Rifle required a particular species of Cartridge which was greased with lard made from the fat either of the hog or the ox."[22]

Field-Marshal Lord Roberts states:

"The recent researches of Mr. Forrest in the records of the Government of India prove that the lubricating mixture used in preparing the cartridges was actually composed of the

objectionable ingredients, cows' fat and lard, and that incredible disregard of the soldiers' religious prejudices was displayed in the manufacture of these cartridges."[23]

Reference may be made in this connection to a letter written on March 23, 1857, by Anson, the Commander-in-Chief at the time of the Mutiny, to Lord Canning. "I am", says he, "not so much surprised at their (sepoys') objections to the cartridges, having seen them. I had no idea they contained, or rather are smeared with such a quantity of grease, which looks exactly like fat".[24] When the sepoys were forced to taste this abhorrent mixture, it is hardly a wonder that they broke into mutiny. Lecky has very properly observed that "English writers must acknowledge with humiliation that if mutiny is ever justifiable, no stronger justification could be given than that of the Sepoy troops."[25]

It would, therefore, be reasonable to believe that the apparent cause of the mutiny of the sepoys was also the real one, though it was strengthened by many previous factors. Among these factors much importance has been given to the annexation of Avadh and the dispossession of the *Talukdars* in that Province. As most of the sepoys came from Avadh this might have possibly a great deal to do with the discontent of the sepoys, particularly as they lost some of the privileges which they enjoyed before the annexation. But it is difficult to say whether this factor would have been powerful enough, by itself, to cause the great commotion. In any case, Ahsanulla, in his evidence at the trial of Bahadur Shah, definitely held that the sepoys of Delhi and Mirat were not much excited over this affair.[26]

Many eminent contemporaries have pointed out vital defects in the organisation of the Bengal Army as causes of the Mutiny. The most serious among these was the system of promotion by considerations of seniority alone. As Lord Roberts remarks, the system which entailed the "employment of brigadiers of seventy, colonels of sixty, and captains

of fifty,—which took no account of Officers' special fitness to manage men of a very different race and religion, was bound to end in disaster." It was also pointed out that as there was very little chance of promotion by merit, Indians of good families did not join the army as before, and recruitment had to be made from the lower strata of society. Discipline had also suffered. In certain cases demands for increased pay on the part of the sepoys were granted only after they had broken out into mutiny. "An army which feels that it can dictate to Government in matters of pay and allowance......have gone beyond the bounds of control."[27]

All these cannot be certainly counted among the 'causes' of the Mutiny, but might, at best, be regarded as factors which favoured or facilitated it. There were several other factors of this kind which are often regarded as causes of the Mutiny. It has been suggested, for example, that the disastrous results of the first Afghan War, and exaggerated reports of the success of the Persians and the Russians against the English at Herat and Crimea, emboldened the sepoys to rise against the British Government. The lack of intimate personal touch between the sepoys and their officers, the considerable curtailment of the power of the latter over the former due to recent change of regulations, the paucity of European troops, the new system of the recruitment of sepoys by which each regiment was filled in with the members of a few families, the inferior and humiliating position of the sepoys and their native officers, and other grievances, mentioned by Hidayat Ali and at the beginning of this chapter, should also be regarded as predisposing, rather than real and immediate, causes of the Mutiny. The same thing may be said of the hope of plunder, domination and license, such as the army never enjoyed under British rule.

The grievance about the payment of extra-allowances was no doubt a very real and material one, but it was of long standing and it is very doubtful whether by itself it would

have induced the sepoys to break out into an open mutiny in a body all over the country, and risk everything including their lives.

The same thing may be said of other still more important predisposing causes, *viz.* the memory of the old mutinies and the weakness displayed by Lord Dalhousie in dealing with the mutinous regiments that refused to go to Sindh and Burma. As the newspapers of the time commented, Dalhousie was the first Governor-General to succumb to the mutineers. According to the *Red Pamphlet*, "from that moment a revolt became a mere question of time and opportunity."[28]

Numerous examples of mutiny in the past took away to a certain extent the dread of the thing, and the memory of the martyrs, who suffered in those risings, undoubtedly served as an inspiration and stimulus. A remarkable instance of this has been given above.[28a]

The great disparity in numbers between the sepoys and the British soldiers must have also proved a strong incentive to mutiny. "When the Mutiny broke out, the whole effective British force in India only amounted to 36,000 men, against 257,000 native soldiers. The latter number does not include the bodies of armed and trained police, nor the lascars attached to the artillery as fighting men. These amounted to many thousands."[29]

These and other circumstances, of which we probably know very little or nothing, might have operated as contributing factors to the development of the revolutionary mentality, but would hardly have, by themselves, produced the conflagration. There were heaps of combustibles here and there, and the cartridge cry was the spark which set them ablaze. But it is very likely that but for this spark they might have lain for ages, as they did for many years past, may be occasionally emitting fumes and streaks of flame, but never combining to produce a blazing fire.

There is no reason to think that the sepoys were animated, at least to begin with, either by any nationalist sentiments or by a sense of patriotism,[29a] or even by any strong desire to restore the Mughul rule in India. The last one might have been added at a later stage, but at the beginning of the outbreak it did not play any part in exciting the sepoys. The utmost that can be said is that in their excitement over the greased cartridges they might have imbibed some sort of a blind fury against the British, and a determination to drive them and to destroy their rule and authority in India. But there was nothing new in such attitude, and the cry of 'drive away the feringhees' was raised in Awadh, the centre of the Mutiny of 1857, as far back as the days of Chait Singh (1781). Many other instances of this have been noted above in Book I, Chapter III. But the conduct of the mutinous sepoys towards the Indians, to which detailed reference has been made above,[30] belies the theory that they were actuated by any patriotic motive and nationalist sentiment. It is significant that all the contemporary Indian writers, without any exception, have represented the sepoys as enemies of the people, and not as patriotic fighters for their country's freedom. These writers leave no doubt that the sepoys were dreaded, not loved, by the general population.[31] Even Bahadur Shah, Nana, the Rani of Jhansi and Tantia Topi denounced the conduct of the Sepoys as mentioned above.[32]

Of all the Indian witnesses who deposed at the trial of Bahadur Shah, Ahsanulla seems to have been the most straightforward and best informed. Being a confidential physician of the King, he had ample opportunities of knowing the facts, and his long detailed statement has a ring of truth. His views therefore carry special weight. Among other things he said:

"The mutinous troops would not appear to have won over the people of the country, because if they had, they would have treated them with consideration, and would not have

oppressed and plundered them as they did. The sepoys had not, before their breaking out into mutiny, united to themselves the Mussalman population of Delhi. If they had, they could not have oppressed and plundered the Mahomedans of Delhi in the manner they did. The abandoned classes of the city required no instigation to rise up. The confusion and disorder of the time in itself encouraged them to unite with the sepoys."[33]

There might have been individual sepoys who were animated by high and noble motives, but as a class they cannot be regarded as a band of patriots or nationalists fighting for their country.

So, no special motive or new impetus, either of nationalism or of patriotism, need be invoked to explain the attitude of the sepoys. Their activities may be readily explained by the various causes of discontent noted above, culminating in the order to use greased cartridges. It is not necessary to look for any other cause or motive, or to interpret their action in any other light than a reaction to grievances felt, whether real or fancied, unless there is authentic evidence to the contrary. Such evidence, however, is not yet forthcoming.

FOOTNOTES

1. See pp. 22-29.
2. See pp. 29-40.
3. Ms. L. Vol. 727, pp. 759-68.
4. Sen, 13.
5. *Calcutta Journal*, March 11, 1822.
6. Madras Official Records ; G. O. No. 34a dated 27th October, 1946.
7. *SAK*, 20.
8. Ibid.
9. These missionary activities among the sepoys are described in the *Englishman*, a Calcutta Daily, in its two issues, dated April 2 and 8. In its issue dated May 23, 1857, it wrote : "Lieut. Col. Wheler be tried by Court Martial and dismissed. This should go further to tranquilise the army. You will have struck at the root of the evil."

10. I am indebted to Dr. S. B. Chaudhuri for these references to the *Englishman* and the *Hindu Patriot.* Cf. SB-II, p. 4, fn. 5.

11. Roberts-II, 436 f.n.

12. See pp. 38-9.

13. See p. 437.

14. Whether the apprehensions of the sepoys were well-founded or not—evidence now available shows that they were not—they were real and very widely spread. The men of the 34th N. I., with whom the whole trouble began, were almost convinced that they would sooner or later be converted to Christianity. It was said that Lord Canning, the Governor-General, left England under a pledge to Lord Palmerston that he would do his best to convert the whole of the native population of India (*The Times,* 10 June, 1857). A correspondent from N.W.P. wrote to the *Englishman* of Calcutta (1 May, 1857): "All classes of natives imagine that they were to be converted by force......Amongst the native soldiery this erroneous imagination dangerously exists". (Quoted by Dr. P. C. Gupta in *J. N. Banerjea Volume* pp. 262-3).

15. Captain Martineau wrote to one of his colleagues on 5 May, 1857: "I am afraid to say I can detect the near approach of the storm... but can't say how, when or where it will break forth...here are all the elements of combustion at hand, 100,000 men, sullen, distrustful, fierce with all their deepest and inmost sympathies as well as worst passions roused and we thinking to cajole them into good humour by patting them on the back and saying, what a fool you are for making such a fuss about nothing. They no longer believe us, they have passed out of restraint and will be off at a gallop before long." (Home Miscellaneous Series, Vol. 725, pp. 1015-54), quoted by P. C. Gupta in *J. N. Banerjea Volume,* p. 264.

16. This point has been fully discussed by P. C. Gupta (op. cit. 260), who also gives the history of the Grease Question from 1854.

17. SB-II, 6 ; f.n. 2.

18. K. I. 550, f.n.

19. K. I. 617 f.n.

20. Ibid.

21. *AS.* 110.

22. *RP.* 18.

23. Roberts-II, 431.

24. Roberts-II, 49 f.n. ; K, I. 558 f.n.

25. Lecky, *The Map of Life* (1900), p. 98.

26. *TB,* 246 ff.

27. *AS,* 104.

28. *RP,* 9.

28a. See p. 36.

29. Roberts-II, 434. As noted above, the figures given by Holmes (p. 62 f.n.) are somewhat different.

29a. See above, pp. 407-8.

30. See pp. 325ff. ; 232-3.

31. See pp. 383-4.

32. Cf. Book III, the different chapters under these names.

33. *TB*, 225.

CHAPTER IV

THE CAUSES OF THE OUTBREAK OF THE CIVIL POPULATION

There is nothing to show that the sepoys who mutinied at Berhampore, Barrackpur, and Mirat, or their sympathising colleagues, anticipated that their action would throw a large part of the country into a terrible conflagration. There is nothing on record which might lead one to believe that there was any reasonable cause of apprehension in the minds of the British, or of hope in the minds of any large section of the Indians, that the mutiny of soldiers would lead to popular rising with a grim determination to end the British rule in India. It is, therefore, necessary to consider why a purely military insurrection soon outstepped its proper limits and became, in certain areas like Avadh, a vast upsurge of popular movement.

One would naturally regard it as a somewhat strange phenomenon that although there was no general conspiracy or organization, the mutiny of sepoys should have been followed by a popular rising on a wide scale, at least in certain areas. A variety of reasons have therefore been assigned for the outbreak. Some of these are puerile in the extreme, such as Russian intrigue, divine punishment for not spreading Christianity, and belief in a prophecy that the British empire would come to an end after 100 years. Others are merely guess-works such as the Muslim conspiracy to restore Mughal Empire and Brahmin conspiracy to retain their power. The real cause is, however, not far to seek.

There is a French saying that if you want to find out the criminal, then first look out for the woman. Similarly, most people naturally argue that if you want to determine the

causes of a popular revolt, first find the causes of discontent or the grievances of the parties concerned. These have been discussed above and it is against this natural background that we have to study the contemporary views about the causes of the popular outbreak in 1857-8. It is not necessary to refer to them in detail. A few select opinions will be sufficient for our purpose.

Munshi Mohanlal of Delhi wrote a memorandum[1] on the subject, being asked by Brigadier Chamberlain to prepare an impartial account after a comprehensive inquiry. The main causes cited by him may be summarised as follows:—

1. The disaffection caused by the territorial acquisition. It made the Chiefs nervous, while their subjects grew restive, as they sighed for the old unlawful emoluments and pomp of the court life. The disbanded forces wandered about in the country and created disaffection among the people. They also spread rumours about the victory of Russia against England, and advance of Persia towards Herat, and gave exaggerated accounts of the success of the Santals in their rebellion against the English.

2. Although the Indians realised the advantages of the British rule, they were offended by "the distant and contemptible manner" with which the English treated the Indians, and really felt delighted at heart at the discomfiture and sufferings of the English at the hands of the mutineers.

3. The ignorance of the Indians about the real power and resources of Britain.

4. The annexation of Avadh. He remarks in this connection that 'the courtiers of the ex-King of Oudh, if not he, spared no arts and intrigues in creating disturbances in Oudh and other parts of India about the end of 1856.'

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan wrote a book in Urdu, entitled *Essay on the Causes of the Indian Revolt*, almost immediately after the Mutiny. As noted above, he regarded the non-admission of the Indians into the Legislative Council of India

as the "primary cause of the rebellion, the others being merely incidental or arising out of it." But this and many other causes mentioned by him are, really speaking, sources of discontent and disaffection rather than immediate causes of the revolt. Reference has been made above to many of these, such as auction-sale of Zamindary lands, heavy assessment of lands, abolition of *Tālukdari* rights particularly in Avadh, introduction of stamp paper in judicial proceedings, exclusion of natives from high posts, arrogant attitude of the officials towards the Indians, and ignorance of the Government of the feelings and prejudices of their subjects. He lays particular stress upon the poverty of the people which always leads to a general desire for the change of Government. As a direct bearing of this upon the Mutiny he notes that many persons were so poor and wretched that they gladly "served the rebels on one anna, one and half annas, or for one seer of flour per diem."[2] He further observes that "the Indians believe that there is no crime in serving the master,—and they should obey the ruler of the moment. So large numbers of otherwise well disposed men went over to the side of the rebels and espoused their cause."[3]

Syed Ahmad laid great stress on the genuine apprehension of the people regarding mass conversion to Christianity to which reference has been made in the preceding chapter. There is no doubt, says he, "that all persons, whether intelligent or ignorant, respectable or otherwise, believed that the Government was really and sincerely desirous of interfering with the religion and customs of the people, converting them all, whether Hindus or Mahomedans, to Christianity, and forcing them to adopt European manners and habits. This was perhaps the most important of all the causes of the rebellion."[9] The people believed that it would be done imperceptibly and by slow process. In support of this Syed Ahmad points out that "during the general famine of 1837, numbers of orphans were converted to Christianity and this fact was considered throughout the North-

Western Provinces as convincing proof of the intention of Government to reduce the country to poverty, and thus make its peoples Christians.'[5] Syed Ahmad also asserts that the civil and military officers helped the missionaries. The latter openly preached in mosques and temples and abused other religions, and because a chaprasi or policeman accompanied them no one dared object for fear of authorities[6]. Syed Ahmad held that while the Act XV of 1856 (remarriage of Hindu widows) added to the apprehension, the Act XXI of 1850 (right of inheritance of Christian converts) directly encouraged conversion to Christianity.

Among other important causes of the revolt, Syed Ahmad refers to the resumption of *lakhiraj* lands. "It is worthy of notice", says he, "that all the proclamations issued by the rebels, referred to nothing but two circumstances, *viz.* interference with religion and the resumption of *mooafis.*"[7]

Among the Mutiny Papers collected by Kaye, and now preserved in the Commonwealth Relations Office, London, there is a very curious pamphlet consisting of about 250 pages written in hand[8]. It is the English translation, by Syed Abdulla, of a pamphlet, dated 15th September, 1857, written by Shaikh Said Rungin Rakam under the supervision of Kishori Lal Lahori. The pamphlet bears the title "Advice of the Royal Army", and contains an elaborate justification of the mutiny. It begins by saying that the English rule will last only for 100 years for the beneficent character of the British rule has changed'. Then it makes the very curious statement that "a Babu has compiled a book in which he has collected one lakh and fifty-five thousand of examples of their (English) treachery up to 1848. From 1849 to 1857 thousands of other instances of their breaking their engagements have occurred and are well known to all men." Then follow those examples. It is a violent diatribe against the British rule in India. Though this pamphlet cannot be treated seriously as a historical document, it proves the bitter resentment of a

certain section of the Indian public against the British character and the British system of administration ; it also shows their wholehearted sympathy with the mutiny of the sepoys and great glee at the sufferings they inflicted upon the English.

Many other writers have expressed their views about the causes of the Mutiny, but they are more or less repetitions of the above. Practically all of them trace the genesis of the revolt to the various causes of profound discontent and disaffection of the Indians towards the British, which have been discussed above in detail, in Book I, Chapter II.

It is not necessary in the present context to discuss whether or how far the discontent was reasonable and justified. But that it was genuine and profound is proved by a deep-seated hatred against the British among nearly all classes of people. Many Englishmen could discern this even long before 1857. Bishop Heber wrote in 1824 that the "natives of India do not really like us...........if a fair opportunity be offered, the Mussalmans, more particularly, would gladly avail themselves of it to rise against us.'[9] Many other Englishmen have testified to this state of feeling from their own experience and observation[10]. Nothing perhaps illustrates this spirit of hatred better than the following story recorded by Mrs. Coopland. "An Officer, when trying the prisoners, asked a sepoy why they killed women and children. The man replied: When you kill a snake, you kill its young"[11]

But neither discontent nor hatred, by itself, leads to an outbreak. A suitable opportunity is necessary for their manifestation in overt acts. Such an opportunity presented itself when the sepoys, the chief prop of the British power in India, openly broke out into mutiny and seemed to hold their ground against their late masters. It was not till then that all the latent or pent-up feelings of the people could be canalised into revolutionary activities by local leaders to serve their own interests.

Thus, really speaking, the so-called causes mentioned above, were more or less pre-disposing causes facilitating the revolt, rather than immediate causes leading to it. This aspect of the question is generally overlooked, but J. B. Norton draws attention to it in course of his discussion on the causes of rebellion. Thus he says:[12]

A variety of reasons has been assigned for the outbreak, namely.

1. The Mohammedan conspiracy to put the great Mughal upon the throne of Delhi.
2 The handiwork of Brahmins as a last effort to retain their privileges.
3. Divine punishment for not spreading Christianity.
4. Tampering too freely with the religion of the natives.
5. Russian intrigue.
6. Insult offered to the Indian women.

Norton adds: "I am disposed to consider some of these as conditions favourable to the development and success of rebellion rather than its causes." "Thus, for instance, the lax state of discipline in the Bengal Army was not the *cause* of its mutiny, but the condition which made the mutiny not only a possibility but a very probable contingency." There are various other circumstances to which this remark is applicable, namely.

1. Veneration for the old royal family of Delhi.
2. A belief in a prophecy that the British Empire would end at the end of 100 years.
3. Fair pay and grants of land promised to all sepoys who would join the King of Delhi.
4. Rumours of plundering public treasures and robbery of the private property of murdered Europeans.
5. Hope of domination and license such as the army had never enjoyed under British rule.
6. The paucity of European troops.
7. Racial hatred.[13]

It would appear on a careful analysis that all the so-called causes, mentioned above, were really conditions favourable to the development and success of the Revolt. Among these emphasis has justly been laid upon two, *viz.* (1) the dread of a mass conversion of both Hindus and Muslims to Christianity ; and (2) the annexation of Avadh. That the contemporary views were quite right in regarding these two as the most important factors is amply proved by all the evidences that have since come to light.

As regards the first, it has already been pointed out,[14] that the Indians had very reasonable grounds for such fear, and that they were very seriously perturbed by the dreadful prospect. Almost all the proclamations which were issued by the rebellious chiefs lay special emphasis on this point, and the action of the sepoys shows the extent to which it must have affected the minds of all classes of Indians. Even if we admit that there were designing persons who acted upon this fear of the public to serve their own personal or political ends, we indirectly acknowledge the truth of the view that the fear of losing caste and religion was one of the most potent factors in the general revolt of the civil population.

As regards Avadh there is a surprising unanimity of both Indian and English opinion that it was the most important subsidiary cause of the great outbreak. As has been pointed out more than once, it was in Avadh, more than anywhere else, that the outbreak took the character of a popular revolt. It is, therefore, necessary to refer to this topic at some length.

G. B. Norton regarded the annexation of Avadh as the most important cause. He observes: "It was this which lit the fire and banded together so many Rajahs and nobles against us. They anticipated the British policy of taking away all their rights and privileges. When Peer Ali, the head of the intended revolution at Patna, was detected, his correspondence proved him to have been in communication with Mussee Owl Yuman of Cawnpore, *ever since the annexation*

of Oudh, and showed that a secret conspiracy had existed for some time (Parliamentary Papers). Proclamation of Khan Bahadur Khan of Bareilly, who set himself up as Nawab of that place, refers to the forbidding of adoption and the policy of annexation as the main causes of the rebellion."[15] The main facts concerning the annexation of Avadh by Lord Dalhousie have been noted in Book I, Chap. I. Whatever truth there might be in the British allegations about misrule in Avadh, there is no doubt that the action of the British was most strongly resented by the Indians in general and the people of Avadh in particular. Munshi Mohanlal rightly observed that "however oppressive were the native rulers, the people of those territories were inclined to prefer Indians as their sovereigns to the English." He also stated that one of the most respectable persons in the service of the ex-King of Avadh, who later occupied a high office under the British, told him that "if the British Government only wanted he could get a declaration signed by all people of Avadh stating that they would prefer their ex-Nawab to the English." "If such a thing was possible," continues Mohanlal, "it was quite easy to foment outbreak against the English both in the army and among the people." As a matter of fact, according to Mohanlal, Captain Bird actually predicted some such things. Mohanlal also condemned the system of land-settlement introduced by the British as the ryots were over-assessed, and all the yields of the improvement in land effected by their labour were taken by the Government. He also added that the settlement was distasteful to both the people and sepoys.

If the annexation of Avadh was a highly tyrannical act, the way in which it was carried out and the subsequent measures like the dispossessment of the *Talukdars* excited not only the antipathy of the classes affected but also the indignation of all classes of Indians. Several Englishmen expressed views which were against the British policy in the abstract, but many others, who defended it on theoretical grounds, violently denounced the measure as contributing to the wide-

spread discontent and disaffection of all classes of people in Avadh. In view of the important role which the effect of this policy played in the great outbreak in Avadh, we may quote *in extenso* the views of two distinguished historians, one a contemporary and the other belonging to the next generation, none of whom may be accused of partiality towards, or sympathy with, the Indians. Thus Malleson observes:

"Whatever may be the justification offered for the annexation of Oudh, it cannot be questioned that, having regard to the manner in which that policy was carried out, it not only failed to conciliate—it even tended to alienate from the British every class in India. Under any circumstances the absorption of an independent Mahomedan kingdom would have afforded to the already disaffected section of the Musalmans throughout India, especially in the large cities, not only a pretext, but a substantial cause of discontent and disloyalty. But the annexation of Oudh did far more than alienate a class already disaffected. It alienated the rulers of Native States, who saw in that act indulgence in a greed of power to be satiated neither by unswerving loyalty nor by timely advances of money on loan to the dominant power. It alienated the territorial aristocracy, who found themselves suddenly stripped, by the action of the newly introduced British system, sometimes of one half of their estates, sometimes even of more. It alienated the Mahomedan aristocracy —the courtiers—men whose income depended upon the appointments and pensions they received from the favour of their prince. It alienated the military class serving under the king, ruthlessly cast back upon their families with small pensions or gratuities. It contributed to alienate the British sepoys recruited in Oudh,—and who, so long as their country continued independent, possessed by virtue of the privilege granted them of acting on the Court of Lakhnao by means of petitions presented by the British Resident, a sure mode of protecting their families from oppression. It alienated

alike the peasantry of the country and the petty artisans of the towns, who did not relish the change of a system, which arbitrary and tyrannical though it might be, they thoroughly understood, for another system, the first elements of which were taxation of articles of primary necessity. In a word, the annexation of Oudh converted a country, the loyalty of whose inhabitants to the British had become proverbial, into a hotbed of discontent and ot intrigue".[16]

Holmes also makes the following observations:

"The deposed King of Oude was complaining bitterly of the unmanly cruelty with which the English were treating his family, even the delicate ladies of his Zenana ; and, if these complaints were unfounded, there were others, proceeding from the people, which, though in many cases unreasonable, were natural enough The *talookdars* were being summarily deprived of every foot of land to which they could not establish a legal title ; and, although in all but a very few instances the settlement officers examined their claims with scrupulous fairness, they nevertheless bitterly resented the decisions which compelled them to surrender those villages which they had acquired by fraud or violence. Moreover they writhed under the yoke of a civilising government, which cut away their arbitrary powers, and would not permit them to tyrannise, as they had formerly done, over their weaker neighbours. The village communities indeed gained by the settlement: but it is not likely that they felt any real gratitude towards the British Government ; for they were wholly incapable of appreciating the benevolent motives by which it was actuated. The numerous dependents of the late court, the traders who had ministered to its luxury, were suddenly thrown out of employment: the disbandment of the King's army had thrown a vast horde of desperadoes upon the world with but scanty means of subsistence: the imposition of a heavy tax upon opium had inflamed the discontent of the poorer population, who languished without the drug which they could no longer afford to buy ; while men with whom

lawlessness was a tradition, suddenly found themselves judged by tribunals which aimed at dispensing equal justice to high and low, but which allowed no circumstances to weigh in mitigation of their sentences, and, in civil cases exasperated plaintiff and defendant alike by an inflexible adherence to forms and precepts of which they knew nothing. It was thus the advice of Sleeman and Henry Lawrence to assume the administration of Oude in the interests of inhabitants had been followed. However judiciously carried out, the change of Government, imperatively demanded though it was by every principle of right, must have given sore offence to the most influential classes of the population ; but, carried out as it was, it gave offence to many who might easily have been conciliated."[17]

It has been pointed out above that the repercussion of the annexation of Avadh on the minds of the Indians, particularly on the people of that province, was very great.[17a] Nevertheless, in view of what has been said above regarding the character of the civil outbreak in 1857, it is difficult to regard it as the immediate or even the proximate cause of either the mutiny of the sepoys or of the revolt of the civil population. The Chiefs and people of territories outside the dominion of Avadh did not, and could not be expected to, rise in rebellion as a protest against this measure or to restore the Nawab of Avadh to his throne. And from what we know of the course of conduct pursued by the rebels in Avadh itself, we are bound to conclude that neither the *Talukdars*, nor the cultivators, nor even the general population, excepting perhaps a handful of interested men, were inspired primarily by a sentimental outburst or exasperation at the fate of their king, or any motive of setting right the wrongs done to him. The *Talukdars*, and other Chiefs who took the lead, might have exploited, and certainly took advantage of, and profited by, such a sentiment, but the main-spring of their action was undoubtedly the sense of personal loss which they had suffered and a desire to retrieve their fortune. That was also

the feeling of the rank and file. We do not find them adopting any plan to restore the Nawab of Avadh and any concerted action to carry it into effect. Indeed, so far as available evidence goes, nothing would lead any unprejudiced person to regard the Chiefs and peoples of Avadh as martyrs to the cause of their ex-ruler. But the grave discontent among all classes of people of Avadh caused by the sufferings and injuries mentioned above certainly added intensity to the popular rising when it actually burst forth.

As regards the religious ground also, we have no reason to believe that the men who broke out into revolt had been principally moved by any sense of imminent danger, such as the greased cartridge presented itself to the sepoys, which required a desperate step like an open revolt for its immediate prevention.

We are bound to conclude that the annexation of Avadh and the fear of losing caste or being converted to Christianity were circumstances favouring and facilitating the rebellion, rather than its immediate causes. To argue about probabilities, or to discuss what might happen in certain eventualities, is always a very risky thing in history ; still one might hazard a conjecture that in spite of these two and the many other causes mentioned above, there would probably have been no outbreak on the part of the civil population in Avadh or elsewhere, if there were no successful mutiny of the sepoys. That circumstance furnished the opportunity which was eagerly seized by different elements in different parts of the country, and the nature and volume of discontent in each locality as well as available leadership determined the character of the outbreak. It is a significant fact, very often overlooked, that there was no outbreak in those parts of India where the ground was not prepared by the successful mutiny of the sepoys, even though there existed discontent and the grounds of revolt not much dissimilar to, nor less strong than, those prevailing in the affected parts. In particular, we may refer to the Marathas who, within the memory of the genera-

tion then living, ruled over an empire, and were smarting under the loss of political power, wrongs and indignities heaped upon the Peshwa and the Raja of Satara, and also the iniquities perpetrated by the Inam Commission, which involved quite a large number of leading persons in that area. The British officers themselves have testified to the strong feelings of discontent and resentment against them which were noticeable all over the country. The same thing is also partially true of Rajasthan, where there was an upheaval of anti-British feeling which found expression in heroic ballads, typical of that country. But we find practically nothing or very little by way of active hostilities against the British on the part of the people, far less an organised popular rising, even of a local character, in these regions. Because the ground was not prepared by a successful rising of the sepoys against the English.

Indeed the more we think the more we are convinced that the immediate cause of the civil outbreak on a large scale was the feeling that the days of the British supremacy were numbered. Remembering the tradition of India under Free Lances in not very distant past, and suffering grievous personal losses, many local leaders, who knew about the widely spread popular discontent against the British, would at once realise that their days had come. More than half a century later, during the days of the national movement in Bengal, the British Viceroy Lord Minto asked the ruler of a Native State what would happen if the British left India. The Chief replied, without a moment's hesitation, that his horse would immediately carry fire and sword from one end of the country to the other and not a virgin or a Rupee will remain untouched (or something to this effect). The old ruler of Nabha wrote to several friends of his in Bombay "that if they wanted to get rid of the (British) Raj they had better do so, and that he should at once come down and loot them if he could only get there in time". Lord Minto refers to this in a letter to Morley, dated July 14, 1908, and then adds:

"Very much the same thing has been said directly to myself by a frontier Chief (evidently the one just referred to above), and I believe that all over India there are many who are thinking of the possibility of a weakening of British authority and the opportunities it would offer for wholesale plunder."[18]

If such mentality prevailed even in 1908, we need hardly wonder that similar impulses influenced the action of the Chiefs half a century before. The naked reality of this is proved by many recorded instances.

Reference may be made to the state of things in Gaya, noted above, where the *Zamindar* murdered every villager who opposed him, and bands of mutineers roamed at will over the country, plundered, destroyed public buildings, levied tribute, and ravished the wives of respectable Hindoos.[19]

Whatever we might think today, the people of those days could hardly be blamed if they seriously believed that the English regime was over. The handful of European soldiers, as compared with the number of sepoys, could hardly be expected to survive the attack of the latter, and this view was confirmed by the first reports about the success of the sepoys. The stories of the massacre of the English in various localities, the ignominious flight of the civil and military officers who survived from their stations, the fall of Delhi into the sepoys' hands and the inability of the British to recover it,—all told their own tale. Besides, it was sedulously spread by the sepoys, Bahadur Shah, Nana, and other leaders that the English have been totally routed or exterminated.[20] In those days the effect of such propaganda must have been more effective, for the ordinary people had no idea of the real strength or resources of England, and were induced to minimise them by the exaggerated accounts of the successes of the Russians and Persians against her. Wild and vague rumours about Russia and Persia coming to the aid of India, perhaps deliberately circulated by interested persons or parties, further strengthened

the overweening confidence of the people in their ultimate success against the British. Belief in the prophecy that the British rule would come to an end after hundred years would also appeal to many as a divine confirmation of their natural conclusions. The cumulative effect of all this was to engender a firm belief in the minds of the people at large, particularly in Avadh and Rohilkhand, that the British officers who left their stations in headlong flight were not destined to return any more, and the field was now open for the brave. It should not be forgotten that in those days the people had no means of easily ascertaining the true state of things, particularly in distant areas, as there was no quick means of communication and roads were unsafe.

Judged in the light of this analysis, the real as well as the immediate cause of the civil outbreak was the apparently successful mutiny of the sepoys. The other so-called causes, mentioned above, merely added to the effect of this, and gave it a stimulus and intensity which it would not have otherwise attained.

It is not difficult to trace the stages by which the passive discontent and disaffection of the people were transformed to active rebellion. A contemporary observer, Charles Raikes, to whom reference has been made above, has analyzed the situation in North-Western Provinces somewhat as follows:[21]

"Now of these sixteen millions (of people in N. W. P.) not one-twentieth part resided in districts which had any European soldiers stationed within their limits. The mass of the people knew and acknowledged the supreme power of their English masters, but they attributed that power entirely to the bayonets of the Bengal Native Infantry, which held the forts, arsenals, and treasuries, throughout the country.

"Therefore, when the native soldiers rose, as one man, to burn and slay, to pull down the halls of justice, and to break open the jails, the people at large, who knew little and thought less of the distant resources of England, concluded naturally enough that our day had gone by.

"The catastrophe was viewed with very different feelings by the various bodies of our quondam subjects.

"The predatory class, the Goojurs, the Mewatties, felt instinctively that their day had come. Their natural enemy, the Magistrate, had perished at the hands of the mutineers, or was flying before them, protected only by the people over whom he lately presided. Forthwith they girded on the sword and buckler, seized the matchlock, and sallied forth to pursue their hereditary vocation of plunder. In pursuit of this instinct they played no partizan's part, but with the utmost impartiality robbed alike the straggling European running for his life, or the sepoy carrying off his booty. As a matter of course, there was an end of police, telegraph, postal communication, and every other symptoms of civilisation, wherever these harpies were found.

"The green flag of Islam, too, had been unfurled. The mass of the Muslim community[22] rejoicing to believe that under the auspices of the great Mogul at Delhi their lost ascendency was to be recovered, their deep hatred to the Christian got vent, and they rushed forth to kill and destroy.

"But, making deduction for these classes, the great agricultural communities, the Jat, the Brahmin, the Rajpoot, looked on the English race, under whose auspices they had so long tasted peace and security, with unfeigned compassion. Like the robber tribes, they considered our case hopeless, but unlike them they at first lamented lost order.

"Such was their first impulse; they showed it in a hundred instances, by helping our straggling countrymen, and protecting them from Sepoys or rabble, often at the risk of their own lives.

"But as the course of events hurried on, as Magistrate, Cutcherry, revenue process, subsided alike, these men, who, as forming the bulk of the agricultural class, had been saddled with a very full share of the public imposts, began to think it no bad change if only they could avoid revenue payments for the future.

"In common with the rest of the mankind they were not fond of paying taxes, nor were they long disconsolate when the tax-collector disappeared from the scene."

"If there was no Government, there was no quarter-day."

"It requires no special knowledge of India to comprehend the rapid spread of passive disaffection (not active hostility), under such circumstances as these."

"When disaffection means more money, more power, and no taxes, its growth is a mere necessity of human nature. There would be a good crop of disaffection in Kent or Somersetshire, under parallel conditions."

"But even this natural feeling yielded to a few weeks' experience of anarchy. The Zamindar soon found that it was better to pay land-tax and receive protection, than day and night to fight for his possession with every scoundrel in the countryside. And thus, the bulk of the tax-paying agricultural proprietors in Doab, after the fall of Delhi, welcomed their English masters back with unfeigned satisfaction.

"Still more did the moneyed classes, such of them at least as survived the period of anarchy, rejoice to see the English rule restored. On the retirement of the Magistrate, a furious struggle had commenced at once between the purchasers of land in possession, and the former owners. Native bankers and merchants, who had long been investing their savings in land (purchased generally under decrees of court), were either murdered or scared away. The life of a capitalist in possession of land, whether as purchaser or mortgagee, was soon not worth a week's purchase. Old feuds broke out afresh, homicides, affrays, murders by day, by night, gang robberies and arson. Things grew worse and worse, until, as I have said before, every man but the professional robber or dacoit longed for the return of the Magistrate, notwithstanding the fact that he was also the collector of the Government revenue. The robbers joined the straggling sepoy bands, and to this day are in arms against us, whilst

the rest of the people hastened to pay up all arrears of revenue into our treasuries."

Such is, in brief, the view expressed by Raikes immediately after the Mutiny. Anyone who has carefully read the facts narrated in the preceding chapters will be more inclined to agree with the views of Raikes than those of any others. All the available facts fully support his thesis that the outbreak of 1857 was not a mutiny growing out of a national revolt, or forming part of it, but primarily a mutiny gradually developing into a general revolt in certain areas. The process of this development, of which he has given a painstaking analysis, seems also to be substantially correct, so far at least as the area within his purview was concerned.

There is one grave defect in this otherwise brilliant analysis, namely, that Raikes has not given sufficient importance to the already existing discontent and disaffection of the people, leading to the hatred of the British. The successful mutiny undoubtedly gave the needed opportunity, but it certainly would not have been availed of to the extent that it actually was, unless there were grave discontent and disaffection of the people. But Raikes seems to have accurately marked the gradual stages of development. Confirmation and illustration of his views meet us at almost every step as we read the detailed account of the civil rebellion in different localities. It is fully confirmed by the Rani of Jhansi herself, who was not only faced with the revolt of the local chiefs, but had to fight against a neighbouring ruler who took advantage of her difficulties to feed fat an old grudge and invaded Jhansi. Such was the state of things in what is regarded as one of the centres of India's first War of Independence.

As noted above, it was mainly in Avadh and Rohilkhand, which formed a part of Avadh until its Nawab was forced to cede it to the British, that the popular upsurge reached its maximum momentum. This is easily accounted for by the

their land was to live without honour and the *Talukdars* determined to fight for their barony as their ancestors had done in the days of the Nawabs. Hostilities at once broke out afresh and over a much wider area than before."[26] It would thus appear that the heroic resistance of the Chiefs and people of Avadh were not mainly, far less solely, due to the 'solicitude for their king and country,' and the number of 'patriots' who fought for them alone could not be very large.

The nature of the rebellion in Avadh was therefore distinct from that of other places. Although, for the reasons stated above, we shall not perhaps be justified in calling it a national rising, we may, without much exaggeration, regard it, in the form in which it ultimately developed itself, as a general war against the British who had usurped the throne of Avadh, rather than a rebellion. For the latter term denotes an illegal defiance against a constituted authority, and considering that the English themselves had come into the possession of this kingdom only a year before, by palpably illegal and unjust means, the resistance offered by the Chiefs and people of Avadh, whatever might have been their motive and inspiration at the beginning, may be looked upon as a legitimate war than a rebellion. This aspect of the question, which supplied a moral basis for the resistance to the British, must have largely determined the extent and character of the outbreak in Avadh. The true situation in Avadh seems to have been best realized in the most unexpected quarter. On April 19, 1858, Lord Ellenborough, the President of the Board of Control, wrote a long and spirited letter to Canning, full of adverse—almost caustic—comment on his Proclamation. The following extracts quoted from it may be read with interest:

"We cannot but express to you our apprehension that this decree, pronouncing the disinheritance of a people, will throw difficulties almost insurmountable in the way of the re-establishment of peace. We are under the impression

that the war in Oudh has derived much of its popular character from the rigorous manner in which, without regard to what the chief landholders had become accustomed to consider as their rights, the summary settlement had, in a large portion of the province, been carried out by your officers.

"The landholders of India are as much attached to the soil occupied by their ancestors, and are as sensitive with respect to the rights in the soil they deem themselves to possess, as the occupier of land in any country of which we have a knowledge.

"Whatever may be your ultimate and undisclosed intentions, your proclamation will appear to deprive the great body of the people of all hope upon the subject most dear to them as individuals, while the substitution of our rule for that of their native sovereign, has naturally excited against us whatever they may have of national feeling.

"We cannot but in justice consider that those who resist our authority in Oude are under very different circumstances from those who have acted against us in provinces which have been long under our government. We dethroned the king of Oude and took possession of his kingdom. Suddenly the people saw their king taken from amongst them, and our administration substituted for his, which, however bad, was at least native; and this sudden change of government was immediately followed by a summary settlement of the revenue, which, in a very considerable portion of the province, deprived the most influential landholders of what they deemed to be their property; of what certainly had long given wealth, and distinction, and power to their families.

"We must admit that under these circumstances, the hostilities which have been carried on in Oude have rather the character of legitimate war than that of rebellion, and that the people of Oude should rather be regarded with indulgent consideration than made the subjects of a penalty

exceeding in extent and in severity almost any which has been recorded in history as inflicted upon a subdued nation."[27]

This letter of Ellenborough cost him his high office. It might have been injudicious and against convention, but it certainly blurted out the truth, a rare thing in British official correspondence.

We may sum up the views, stated above, in the shape of the following propositions.

1. If there had not been the sudden, and perhaps unpremeditated, rising of the sepoys at Mirat on May 10, 1857, there would not probably have been any Sepoy Mutiny, at least at the time and in the form in which it occurred.

2. If there had been no Sepoy Mutiny, there would have been no outbreak of the civil population.

3. This outbreak or popular revolt was the direct outcome of the initial success of the Mutiny, and was fed by the volume of discontent and resentment existing against the British, and facilitated by other circumstances.

4. Although these factors sustained the general revolt, it was originally inspired, in the main, by the considerations of personal advantages of individuals or material interests of groups who took the initiative.

5. The extent and character of the popular revolt was determined to a large extent by local conditions and the personality of leaders.

6. The movement of 1857-8 comprised several distinct elements, such as the mutiny of sepoys, sporadic outburst of civil commotion, organized outbreak by predatory tribes and goonda elements, and the popular revolt, in some cases partaking of the character of a legitimate warfare. But as there was no coherence among them, each being limited in extent and objectives, and there was no definite plan, method, or organization, it cannot be regarded as a national rising, far less a war of independence, which it never professed to be.

FOOTNOTES

1. MS. L, Vol. 725, pp. 387 ff.
2. *SAK*, 34,
3. Ibid. 47-8.
4. Ibid. 15.
5. Ibid. 16.
6. Ibid. 17.
7. Ibid. 24-25.
8. MS. L, Vol. 727, pp. 488-733.
9. Quoted by Yusuf Ali, *A Cultural History of India During British Period* (1940), p. 182.
10. Sir Alfred Lyall was struck by "the fierce hatred borne to us by the Mahomedans" shortly before 1857 (Lovett, *A History of Indian Nationalist Movement*, p. 14).
11. Coopland, 234.
12. Norton, 35-7.
13. Ibid. 38-9.
14. Above, pp. 436 ff.
15. Norton, 33.
16. M, I. 348-9.
17. Holmes, 69-70,

17a. See pp. 16-17.

18. Mary, Countees of Minto, *India, Minto and Morley* (1935), pp. 265-6.
19. Holmes, 435-6.
20. The tissue of falsehoods, broadcast by even responsible leaders, about the total destruction of the Englishmen in India, is amazing in ·character. Cf., for examples Nana's orders and proclamations (pp. 261-63).
21. Raikes, 156 ff.
22. The actual words used by Raikes are likely to wound the religious susceptibilities of the Muslims ; hence I have changed them.
23. See p. 169.
24. Innes, *Lucknow and Oude in the Mutiny* (1895), p. 291. The Italics are mine.
25. *CHI*, VI. 200.
26. Sen, 244.
27. Imlah, A. H., *Lord Ellenborough*, p. 255. Parliamentary Papers, 1857-58, XLIII (265) pp. 4-5.

CHAPTER V

THE CAUSES OF FAILURE

Even though we may not regard the outbreak of 1857 as national in character or inspired by the noble object of gaining independence of India, the sudden and unexpected rising of the sepoys over an extensive area, followed by general popular outbreak in many localities, constituted a grave peril for the British dominion in India. The sepoys, trained and equipped by British Officers, exceeded the European soldiers in numerical strength in proportion of seven to one. The sudden and unexpected rising of the sepoys forced the British Officials, civil and military, to leave Avadh and Rohilkhand which passed almost entirely out of British control. The civil population of a wide-spread region also rose in revolt. Almost every thing was in favour of the Indians. On the other hand, the Government could not hope to muster, by all possible endeavours, and within a reasonable period, more than a combined force of Europeans and Indians, which in any case would be far inferior in number to the opposing sepoys. Even among this tiny force of the Government the allegiance of a large element of Indians was at best doubtful. Further, while the Indian forces gained accession of strength by fresh mutinies and outbreaks following one another in rapid succession, the British authorities had their meagre resources crippled by the constant endeavour to keep in check the prospective mutineers, and their plans and schemes were foiled by fresh mutinies and outbreaks cropping up at unexpected places. It was a very difficult task for them to maintain communication with distant centres, as the people of the intervening regions were often openly hostile.

The triumph of the British in the face of all these handicaps is indeed a great marvel, and it is, therefore, necessary, to inquire into the causes for the failure of the revolution.

The most important cause is, of course, the lack of solidarity among the Indians. As noted above, not a single ruling Chief of any importance joined the movement, and large elements of civil population, including the intellectuals as a class, not only kept aloof, but often befriended the British. This was, no doubt, mainly due to the lack of national feeling among the Indians and the mistrust of the ruling Chiefs among themselves, due to historic causes. But due credit must also be given to British diplomacy which could restrain wavering sections, either by threats or promises of rewards. Nowhere was this more evident than in the successful persuasion of the Sikhs to cast in their lot with the English, the very nation that destroyed their power less than ten years before.

But this cause, by itself, is not sufficient to account for the failure of the outbreak. For, even though the revolt did not spread over the whole country, or among all sections of the people, the localities and numbers affected by the mutinous or rebellious spirit could be reasonably deemed to be sufficiently great to ensure success. That this expectation did not materialise was due to a variety of causes of which we may refer to the principal ones.

The most important among these was the lack of a general plan or central organisation guiding the whole movement. We have discussed above whether the outbreak was the result of a general or pre-concerted conspiracy. But, howsoever the opinions might differ on this subject in its theoretical aspect, in practice no general plan or organisation was evident. What we actually find is a number of isolated outbreaks without any link or common plan between them.

There were no doubt some important centres such as Delhi, Kanpur, and Lakhnau, and some sort of organized campaigns were led by the Rani of Jhansi, Tantia Topi and Kunwar Singh. But these campaigns were mainly of local character, restricted within narrow limits, and excepting

shortlived movements of Kunwar Singh and a few Chiefs of Avadh, there was no sort of liaison between the different groups or between the different centres.

The early movements of mutinous troops from different localities to Delhi seemed to indicate an underlying plan involving unity of command. Whether there was really any such general plan will never be definitely known, but it was certainly never carried into practice. Nothing is so striking in the whole military campaigns of 1857-8 as the lack of any effort on the part of the sepoys to prevent the concentration of British troops round Delhi, and to counter-attack them from outside with a view to raising the siege. The British authorities very correctly grasped the importance of Delhi, and knew that its fall would break the backbone of the mutiny. It is difficult to believe that this simple truth would not be apparent to the leaders of the outbreak, if there were any. But the troops of Kanpur, far from attempting the task of relieving Delhi, were dissuaded from marching towards the city. Savarkar has highly commended this policy and argued that "the best interests would not be served by shutting up all the available forces in Delhi."[1] He forgets that what was wanted was to stop the succour coming to the besiegers of Delhi from the Panjab side, and the number of mutinous troops was so large that under proper leadership it should have been possible to cut off the communication between Delhi on the one side and the Panjab and Calcutta on the other. But, as noted above, Nana was guided, not by any consideration of military strategy, but solely by his own self-interest. He did not want to play a second fiddle to Bahadur Shah, and declared himself as Peshwa. His interest was restricted to Kanpur and its neighbourhood, where he could reign supreme. He was not concerned at all either with the siege of Delhi or with the movement of the British troops to Banaras, Allahabad and Lakhnau. The same thing is true of the other so-called leaders.

Nothing illustrates more forcibly the great contrast between the unity of command on the side of the British, and the utter lack of it on the other side, than the successful relief of Kanpur and Lakhnau by the British and the lack of any effort to relieve the siege of Delhi by Nana or any other leader. It is admitted on all hands that Delhi could not have been captured by the British without the constant flow of men and equipment from the Panjab; yet the only communication between the Panjab and Delhi was along a narrow track to the north-west of Delhi running along the border of U. P., the region most affected by the revolutionary spirit. If there were a well-knit organisation in U. P., not to speak in India as a whole, or some able military leader in this region, serious efforts should have been made to intercept the flow of men and equipments from the Punjab to Delhi. But very little was done in this respect. The sepoys at Delhi tried to intercept the siege-train from the Panjab, when it had reached the vicinity of Delhi[2], but no attempt was made to intercept this or the bands of army coming from the Panjab, at a long distance from Delhi where they could not be helped by the British army besieging Delhi. Considering the number of mutinous sepoys roving about in Western U. P. such an attempt had a reasonable chance of success if there had been a capable leader and a good organisation. Similarly no earnest effort was made to prevent the British troops coming from Calcutta to the West. Danāpur and Mirat were the only two cantonments with British troops between the borders of Bengal and the Panjab. The overwhelming number of sepoys in the intervening region, backed by the sympathy and support of the general people, had a unique opportunity of keeping them separate, but they did not care to utilize it.

The inferiority in generalship, strategy, military skill, and discipline of the mutineers was another important cause of the failure of the outbreak. It will be sufficient to contrast

the siege of Delhi with that of Kanpur, Lakhnau, and Arrah to prove this point. Delhi was a walled city with good fortifications, and was defended by a large army, fully equipped, and with free communication with the outside territory. Yet it fell after a siege of four months. At Kanpur, the English took shelter in an improvised camp protected by a shallow trench and a low mud wall. The besieged garrison consisted of a few civilians, a small band of faithful sepoys, and about four hundred English fighting men, more than seventy of whom were invalids. The besieging army, on the other hand, numbered some three thousand trained soldiers, well fed, well lodged, well armed and supplied with all munitions of war, aided by the retainers of Nana Sahib and supported by the sympathy of a large portion of the civil population. In spite of all this Nana, who is credited with great leadership and organizing ability, failed to reduce the place during twenty days, till at last treachery accomplished what his valour and heroism failed to achieve. At Arrah the small garrison of 50 Sikhs and 15 Europeans and Eurasians defended themselves in a small building, originally intended for a billiard room, and held out against the attack of Kunwar Singh at the head of 'some two thousand sepoys and a multitude of armed insurgents, perhaps four times the number of the disciplined soldiery'.[3] The successful resistance of the garrison at the Residency in Lakhnau against enormous odds for a long period is only too well-known and has been described above.[4] Here, again, in a hastily improvised defence post, the British had less than seventeen hundred soldiers, a large proportion of which were sepoys, some of whom were regarded with suspicion, while others were infirm old men. They were besieged by at least six thousand trained soldiers, who were soon reinforced by a large and constantly increasing number of *Talukdars* and their retainers till the number exceeded one hundred thousand. At a later stage, Outram successfully defended Alambagh with four thousand four hundred and

forty-two men, against this vast enemy force, nearly thirty times in number, and the besieged Residency also successfully held out from the beginning of July, 1857, to September 25, when Havelock joined the garrison, and again till the middle of March, 1858, when it was finally relieved. The heroic defence of Lakhnau Residency shows the British valour, heroism, resourcefulness and strategy at their best, and those of the Indians at their worst. The prolonged siege of Lakhnau kept inactive many thousands of sepoys and armed soldiers who might have been more fruitfully employed elsewhere, e.g., preventing the advance of Neill and Havelock, thereby possibly turning the scale of the whole operation in their favour.

Regarding the part played by the Indian fighters at Lakhnau Dr. S. B. Chaudhuri quotes a speech of the Begam of Avadh in which she is reported to have addressed the assembled leaders and Chiefs as follows: "The whole army is in Lucknow, but it is without courage. Why does it not attack Alumbagh ? Is it waiting for the English to be reinforced and Lucknow to be surrounded ? How much longer am I to pay the sepoys for doing nothing ? Answer me now, and if fight you wont, I shall negotiate with the English to spare my life."

"The chiefs answered: 'fear not, we shall fight, for if we do not, we shall be hanged one by one, we have that fear before our eyes.'"[5]

But Dr. Chaudhuri observes (on the very same page): "The operations at Lucknow took the form of a great war of liberation. It marked the climax of India's struggle against Britain, *'a guerre a la mort'*, a war of the most cruel and exterminating form, in which no quarter was given on either side."

Quantitatively considered, Dr. Chaudhuri is certainly right. For, as he puts it : "The army then at Lucknow was little short of a lakh of persons. And there were a

hundred serviceable guns, every street and every lane was barricaded, all the houses loopholed. There were about one hundred and fifty military chiefs who supervised the work of defence, provisions were stored and magazine and treasure were kept in Kaisarbagh. The preparations made on an extensive front and on a wide scale reflect the totality of effort on the part of all the chiefs and their followers which a few thousand of mutinous soldiers, left to themselves, could have scarcely completed."[6]

But if this 'climax of India's struggle' is qualitatively judged by the actual performance and its result, one can only have a very poor idea of the Indians engaged in the 'War of Liberation'. One is perfectly justified in holding that the Begam's estimate of the 'fighters for freedom' was far more accurate than the rhapsodies of their apologists like Dr. Chaudhuri would have us believe.

The long and heroic resistance of Lakhnau Residency offers a great contrast to the defence of the strong forts of Jhansi and Gwalior. The garrison at Jhansi numbered some ten thousand Bundelas and Velaitees and fifteen hundred sepoys. When Sir Hugh Rose invaded the city and fort on March 22, 1858, with his small force of about two thousand, the Rani and her followers must have been astounded at his daring. The Rani heroically defended it till March 31, when Tantia Topi arrived with twenty thousand men to relieve the town. In spite of the magnitude of the peril Sir Hugh did not lose heart. He left a part of his small army to continue the siege and attacked Tantia Topi with the rest. Tantia was defeated on April 1, and fled across the Betwa, being hotly pursued by the British cavalry. On April 3, Sir Hugh entered the fort by direct assault, and next evening the Rani stole out of the fort with a few attendants. It was a signal for a general retreat, and on the 6th the British forces were masters of the city and the fort. It is very surprising indeed that while Tantia had attacked the besieging British army from the rear, and the major part of this small force was engaged in fighting with

his twenty thousand men, the troops inside the fort, more than ten thousand in number, did not make a sortie and try to destroy the small British army, less than a thousand in number, left before the fort. One wonders what more favourable situation than this could the besieged expect for ultimate success against the British or as a means of immediate relief?

The defeat and flight of Tantia and the fall of the strong fort of Jhansi illustrate the hopeless inferiority of the Indians both in defensive war and pitched battles. To a large extent this inferiority in military skill rendered useless some strategic moves on the part of the sepoys. This was well illustrated in the early days of the Mutiny when the sepoys advanced from Delhi to check the progress of the troops from Mirat towards that city. The plan was well conceived and the sepoys occupied a strategic position, but they were successively defeated at the battles on the Hindun on May 30 and 31, and again at Badli-ka-Serai on June 8, although their number and artillery were superior to those of the enemy. The same story was repeated at Najufgarh when they tried to intercept the siege-train sent from the Panjāb.

The successive victories of Havelock on his way from Allahabad to Kanpur also reveal in a striking manner the superior skill and morale of British troops. He had a thousand European infantry soldiers, one hundred and thirty Sikhs and a little troop of volunteer cavalry consisting of eighteen horsemen, and was on the way joined by Reinaud's small detachment. Though his troops were weary and footsore, he won four successive battles against fresh forces of the enemy. In the last battle near Kanpur, Nana himself led his force, five thousand strong, and occupied a very strong strategic position prepared beforehand. Nevertheless the daring, valour and superior skill of the English won for them a brilliant victory. Nana's last battle ended in disaster and the loss of Kanpur.

The strength and weakness of the Indian leaders are best illustrated by the campaigns of the Rani of Jhansi and Tantia after the fall of Jhansi, which have been described above.[7] In spite of successive defeats, the Rani and Tantia conceived the bold plan of seizing the fort of Gwalior. It was a master stroke of strategy, the best that the Indian leaders showed during the whole campaign. But though they easily seized Gwalior with the help of Sindhia's troops who deserted their master in the battlefield and joined them, the failure to take proper measures to arrest the progress of the British army showed a deplorable lack of military strategy and foresight. The surrender of such a strong fort, at the very first assault, practically without any resistance, can only be described as most ignominious.

The Indians, no doubt, scored some little successes now and then, mainly due to their superior numbers and tactical advantage. Illustrations are afforded by the reverses sustained by the small reconnoitring forces of Lawrence at Chinhut near Lakhnau, and the troops of Dunbar at Arrah, as well as the defeat of Windham at Kanpur and of Le Grand near Jagdishpur.[8] Both Kunwar Singh and Tantia Topi also displayed skill and energy, specially in guerilla warfare. But taking into consideration not only the episodes referred to above, but also the military campaigns as a whole, narrated in Book II, Chapters III and IV, it seems quite clear that the Indian sepoys, bereft of their European Officers, were no match for the British troops, either European or Indian.

The failure of the great outbreak must be chiefly attributed to the absence of a great leader, who could fuse the scattered elements into a consolidated force of great momentum, with a definite policy and plan of action. History shows that genuine national movements have seldom failed to throw up such a leader in the course of their progress, not unoften even from most unexpected quarters. Unfortunately, no such leader arose in India during the great outbreak

of 1857-8, perhaps because it was not a national movement, in the true sense of the term.

Nana Sahib, Bahadur Shah, Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi and Kunwar Singh are popularly regarded as great leaders of the 1857 movement. Of these the first, though best known and most talked of, seems to be hardly deserving of any of the high honours usually bestowed upon him. As we have already seen, there is nothing to show that he organized a great political movement, and even if he attempted to do so, he achieved no conspicuous success. As a military commander he was an absolute failure, as is proved by his inability to capture the British camp at Kanpur and defeat in the hands of Havelock near the city. The part he played in dissuading the sepoys from proceeding to Delhi, and his subsequent activities indicate his narrow and selfish outlook and vain-glorious attitude. On the whole, there is nothing in the life and death of Nana Sahib which entitles him to the rank of a hero, a martyr, or a great leader.[8a] Enough has already been said of Bahadur Shah to indicate that he was even worse than Nana, and not only absolutely worthless, but also a traitor to the cause he professed to serve. There is, however, one common point to be considered about them. Greatness was thrust upon them, and they had to accept it much against their will. This is certainly true in regard to Bahadur Shah, and probably true also of Nana. That might soften one's judgment about them, but does not take away from their lack of qualification as leaders.

The Rani of Jhansi undoubtedly stands on a far different footing. Once she decided to rise against the English, she showed unbounded energy and resolution, combined with heroism and daring which we miss in Nana. But we cannot regard Rani Lakshmibai as having organized the great revolt, or played the part of its leader. Her activities were confined to a narrow area and covered a very brief period, towards the end of the movement. Even then she

achieved no conspicuous success against the British on the battlefield, and cannot be said to have contributed, in any substantial measure, to the cause of the Indians. Her title to fame rests more upon her personal character than upon her outstanding position as a great political or military leader.

The position of both Kunwar Singh and Tantia Topi is analogous to that of the Rani of Jhansi. They obtained more successes against the English in the battlefield and carried on more vigorous and prolonged campaigns. But their activities also were confined within narrow limits, and none of them has any claim to be regarded as a leader of the movement in 1857 in any sense of the term. Nor had they contributed anything substantial to shaping the general course of the great movement.

The most glaring fact to be noted in this connection is that though the revolt was most widely spread in Avadh, there was not a single leader who exercised any control over the vast but scattered rebel forces, or had any voice in shaping the general course of the great movement. Neither Maulavi Ahmadulla nor the Begam of Avadh, nor any of the heroic *Talukdars* or Chiefs can really claim such a position.

To the lack of leadership must be attributed the serious, almost incredible, errors committed by the sepoys which in *many* cases saved the British from great disasters. Devout Englishmen could only explain them as divine dispensation.[9] Sir Henry Lawrence observed:

"Many thoughtful and experienced men now in India believe that it has only been by a series of miracles that we have been saved from utter ruin. It is no exaggeration to affirm that in many instances the mutineers seemed to act as if a curse rested on their cause. Had a single leader of ability arisen among them, nay, had they followed any other course than that they did pursue in many instances, we must have been lost beyond redemption. But this was not to be".[10]

The failure of the outbreak may also be attributed to the fact that neither the leaders, nor the sepoys and the masses were inspired by any high ideal. The lofty sentiments of patriotism and nationalism, with which they are credited, do not appear to have had any basis in fact. As a matter of fact, such ideas were not yet familiar to Indian minds. A strong disaffection and hatred towards the English, and hopes of material gain to be derived by driving them out, were the principal motives which inspired and sustained the movement. The spirit of defending religion, which kindled the fire, soon receded into the background, and though it formed the slogan or war-cry for a long time, a truly religious inspiration was never conspicuous as a guiding force of the movement. On the other hand, the British were inspired by the patriotic zeal for retaining their empire and profoundly moved by the spirit of revenge against the Indians who had murdered their women and children.

But even though, for reasons aforesaid, the great outbreak of 1857 ended in failure, it would be a mistake to minimize its importance, or underrate the gravity of its danger to the British. In spite of all their defects and drawbacks, the sepoys and Indian rebels, by their number and favourable situation, threatened to destroy the whole fabric of the British empire. Its fate hung on a thread as it were, and it was almost a touch and go.

If Indian rulers like Sindhia and Nizam joined the Mutiny the consequences might have been very serious to the British. Lord Canning is reported to have said that "if Sindhia joins the rebels I will pack off tomorrow." A contemporary Englishman referred to the general feeling that "if Hyderabad had risen we could not escape insurrection practically over the whole of Deccan and Southern India." The same writer continues: "Similarly the situation would have been very critical if there were no friendly ruler in Nepal. Lastly we must also acknowledge with thankfulness the debt we owe to the educated natives".[11]

There is a great deal of truth in all this. In particular, the lack of interest shown by the intellectuals in the movement was a serious drawback, the full extent of which will perhaps never be known. History of modern times shows that all great political movements have an intellectual background and draw their nourishment largely from that source. The outbreak of 1857 not only lacked any such intellectual background but ran counter to the views of the intellectual classes who never looked upon it with sympathy.[12]

The outbreak of 1857 would go down in history as the first great and direct challenge to the British rule in India on an extensive scale. It must be admitted by all unprejudiced critics that the British Government and people bravely accepted the challenge and proved equal to the occasion. The resourcefulness, organizing ability and statesmanship of the Government, backed by devotion to duty, courage, and a spirit of fellow-feeling and sacrifice among the officials which never yielded to privations and sufferings, however great, enabled the British to survive the fiery ordeal. Tribute must also be paid to British diplomacy which could gather round their banner the solid phalanx of the Sikhs—a proud nation of heroes who believed in their hearts that the British had defrauded them of their dominions and independence by most ignoble means. And this had taken place less than ten years back, within the living memory of those who shed their blood for the British cause. Similarly the Pathan hill-tribes on the North-West frontier, against whom the British had been waging bitter fight for years, were enlisted to support their cause, and these along with their mortal and hereditary enemies, the Sikhs, were fighting side by side to preserve the dominions of their common enemy, the British. A race which could successfully employ the sepoys against the Sikhs, and then the Sikhs against the sepoys, the sepoys against the Pathans and the Gurkhas, and then the Pathans and the Gurkhas against the sepoys, certainly deserves an empire. Similarly, credit is due to the

British for having retained the allegiance of the Sindhia, who was so shabbily treated by Ellenborough in 1843-4, and of the Nizam who was compelled to cede Berar by force and fraud in 1853. Whether these examples redound to the credit of the British diplomacy, or merely betray the utter lack of national spirit among the Indians, may be questioned. But in either case, they point to one important factor, often ignored by historians, which contributed largely to the success of the British and the failure of the Indians.

FOOTNOTES

1. Savarkar, 220.
2. See p. 157.
3. K. III, 124 ; See p. 140.
4. See pp. 162-65.
5. SB—II, 135.
6. Ibid, 137.
7. See pp. 179 ff.
8. See pp. 133. 140, 161-2, 176.

8a. The latest and the most up-to-date biography of Nana Sahib, by Dr. P. C. Gupta, makes no such claim and does not credit Nana with any active or passive part in organizing the Mutiny or the so-called War of Indian Independence.

9. See p. 156.
10. AS. I, 114.
11. Norton, p. 56.
12. This is proved by the statements of all the contemporary Indians, whose writings are so far known. See above, p. 384.

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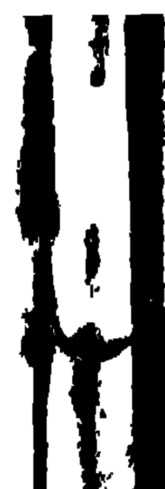
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